



# WGFD

*Conserving Wildlife, Serving People*

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## News Release

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### **G&F Warns of Winter Wildlife Conflicts**

JACKSON- Workers with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department in Jackson found themselves working to free a young bull elk that had gotten its antlers tangled in a woven wire fence along the west boundary of the National Elk Refuge on Thursday. Game and Fish officials say these types of predicaments are becoming all too common, especially in the winter when many big game animals descend to lower elevation winter ranges that are often occupied by human development.

Two young bull elk found themselves trapped on the wrong side of the eight-foot fence in the WY Highway 89 right-of-way, as they were migrating to the National Elk Refuge. One of the elk found an “elk jump” constructed to allow elk through the fence and onto the refuge. The other elk apparently got spooked by the bustling highway traffic and tried to bust through the fence, but became tangled.

Once on the scene, Game and Fish employees acted quickly to restrain the animal and free it, not an easy task with an agitated 700 pound wild animal. However, they successfully lassoed a rope around one of the elk’s antlers and subdued the animal by pulling it close to one of the fence posts. “We try to avoid having to tranquilize an animal if possible,” says Jackson Region Game and Fish biologist, Doug Brimeyer. “The safety of everyone, including the animal, is always paramount, and in this case we felt we could handle the animal quickly because of the way it was tangled in the fence.”

Reaching through the intact portion of the fence, Game and Fish employees cut the wire from around the bull’s neck and sawed off the tangled antler. Then they sawed off the roped antler, freeing the animal where it joined the other elk within the refuge. “Luckily, we were able to get to the animal quickly, before it seriously injured itself,” said Brimeyer. “When a animals

become entangled they often break a leg or cut themselves on the wire leaving us with little option but to put the animal down.”

Wildlife officials say this is the time of year when wildlife conflicts such as this increase dramatically. In the last week, Game and Fish officials spent several days responding to calls of four different moose in the Cottonwood Park Subdivision, including one bull moose with Christmas lights entangled in its antlers, and also had to put down a trophy mule deer buck that had been hit by a car.

“We’ve been getting a lot more calls at the office lately, primarily moose and elk showing up in developed areas,” said Game and Fish spokesperson, Mark Gocke. “If this winter is anything like last winter, we can expect a lot of moose in developed areas throughout the valley as winter wears on. We all need to do our part to share the landscape with these animals by doing things like slowing down on our highways, not feeding wildlife, keeping our pets under control and just giving the animals room.”

Officials say these types of wildlife conflicts are a direct result of human development on the animals’ traditional winter range and it will only become worse as more development occurs.

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