

December 2011

# The Trapline

United States Department of  
Agriculture

Animal & Plant Health  
Inspection Service

Wildlife Services



*Cooperating with:*

Nevada

Department of Agriculture

Division of Resource Protection



[www.agri.nv.gov](http://www.agri.nv.gov)

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## Mission Statement

The Nevada Wildlife Services Program (WS) is a collaborative program involving the Nevada Department of Agriculture's Division of Resource Protection (State) and the USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services Program (federal), whose mission is to protect agriculture, natural resources, property, and the human health and safety of the citizens of Nevada from the threat of injury, damage, or resource loss due to wildlife.

## Introduction

During December, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **10.3** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$138** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$13** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **54** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$2,900** in damage and WS Specialists verified another **\$23,450** in damage to other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During December, coyotes accounted for **\$6,000** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **769** coyotes were taken with a variety of management methods to resolve these and other ongoing complaints. WS routinely collects blood samples or oral swabs from species taken or handled during normal control activities for monitoring the presence of plague, avian influenza, and other diseases. In December, **5** samples were processed.

*The following excerpts are a selection of activities and events of this program which occurred during the month of December, 2011.*

## Resource Protection

### State Office

During December, 2011, the State Office trap loaning program checked out **10** cage traps. The species distribution for the traps loaned out were: raccoons (**7**), and striped skunks (**3**). Information regarding baits to use, trap placement tactics, handling of trapped animals and safety precautions to take when working with the wildlife species were provided for all equipment loaned.

**East District**

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, Wildlife Specialist (WS) Scott Little received a report concerning the loss of two adult sheep, valued at \$500. WS Little had previously placed more than 50 traps in the area, due to historically high predation issues. After confirming that coyotes had killed both ewes, WS Little inspected the equipment he had previously set. During the check, WS Little removed five adult coyotes near the band of sheep. WS Little's experience and knowledge, no doubt, saved many more sheep from these coyotes. No further losses have been reported and WS Little continues to monitor the many bands of wintering sheep in his area. WS Little also provided technical assistance, in the form of non-lethal recommendations, to help prevent future problems.



CM Taylor and WS Spires

On December 7<sup>th</sup>, WS Matt Spires received a report concerning the loss of two ewes, valued at \$500. WS Spires traveled to the location of the sheep in northern White Pine County and confirmed that coyotes were responsible for the predation. WS Spires contacted the Ely plane for assistance. On December 8<sup>th</sup>, the Ely plane, crewed by Instructor Pilot (IP) Tim Keogh and Crew Member (CM) Jerred Taylor responded to the location. During the morning's operation, one adult coyote was removed near the location of the kills. WS Spires also placed ground equipment near the kills, resulting in the removal of two additional coyotes, which brought the damage to an end.

On December 9<sup>th</sup>, WS Aaron Freund received a call concerning the loss of one adult sheep, valued at \$250. In response, WS Freund placed several traps near the location of the kill, which resulted in the successful removal of five coyotes, bringing the damage under control. No further losses have been reported and WS Freund will continue to monitor the twelve bands of sheep in his area.

During the week of December 12<sup>th</sup>, District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett and Staff Biologist (SB) Jack Sengl conducted a starling removal project at a large dairy in southern Nye County. The dairy had experienced more than \$16,000 in feed loss due to starlings and mixed black birds consuming feed. Large numbers of these birds can also result in both milk production losses as well as contamination of the feed. Non native European Starlings can pose a public safety threat from the large amount of droppings they create. The project went very well with excellent results. The cooperator was very pleased with the results. Technical assistance was also provided in an attempt to help prevent future problems.



During the week of December 12<sup>th</sup>, Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler spent the week surveying the area on and near Mount Moriah. MLS Buhler was checking for mountain lion activity near wintering Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep in the area. MLS Buhler used his mules to access the remote region. Despite several days in the back country, MLS Buhler did not find any recent lion activity. MLS Buhler will continue to check these locations this winter.

On December 14<sup>th</sup>, WS Virgil Fullerton received a report concerning the loss of two adult sheep, valued at \$500. WS Fullerton traveled to the remote location in southeastern White Pine County and confirmed that both sheep had been killed by coyotes. WS Fullerton placed several traps near the kill site. During the next two weeks, WS Fullerton removed two coyotes utilizing traps. WS Fullerton also requested the assistance of the Ely plane. On December 21<sup>st</sup>, the Ely plane, crewed by IP Keogh and CM Taylor, responded to the location. During the morning's flight, three additional coyotes were removed, bringing the damage under control. No further losses have been reported. WS Fullerton provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future problems from occurring.

On December 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, IP Keogh traveled to Winnemucca, Nevada and conducted two check rides with other Wildlife Service's Pilots. IP Keogh is a valuable asset to the Nevada Wildlife Services program and is always willing to conduct these important safety check rides with both the Nevada Pilots as well as Pilots from other States. IP Keogh's willingness to travel to other locations saves Wildlife Services on both time and money.

On December 16<sup>th</sup>, the Elko plane, crewed by Pilot Ken Baer and CM Wayne Rowley, flew on a sheep and cattle ranch in western Elko County. During the past several years, the ranch has experienced very high losses to both sheep and calves. In an effort to help minimize these losses, the plane removed 39 coyotes during the morning's operation. The owner of the ranch was very pleased with the assistance provided by the Nevada Wildlife Services program and the Elko aerial crew.



During December, WS Dayne Barnes continued his wildlife protection project in the Delamar Mountains and the surrounding area. WS Barnes utilized traps, calling, snaring, mountain lion call boxes and shooting to remove several coyotes from the area. WS Barnes also used trail cameras to monitor predator activity in the remote locations. WS Barnes reported that he called and removed two adult male coyotes very near to a band of desert bighorn sheep. On at least two occasions in the past, coyotes have been documented killing bighorn ewes in this area.

During December, WS Derril Fry had no reported predation in his area. WS Fry proactively removed several coyotes near several bands of sheep in his winter area. Without the efforts of WS Fry, losses could have been much higher. Both of WS Fry's cooperators are very pleased with his protection efforts.

### West District

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Wes Gossard and CM Brandon VanderMay conducted aerial operations on seven calving areas, in Humboldt County. During the flight, the aerial crew spotted a cow with coyotes feeding on her hind end while she was still alive. This scenario happens occasionally when cows are birthing as they are extremely vulnerable. The cow had to be put down and her calf had already been killed by the coyotes (loss valued at \$1,100). The aerial crew removed nearly a dozen coyotes at the location. The aerial crew continued on and removed additional coyotes from the many other calving areas. During the flight, a total of 60 coyotes were removed.



Several of the cattle producers were onsite during the aerial operations and were pleased with the results. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

During the first week of December, a livestock producer reported that two young foals had gone missing in an area where lions annually kill this livestock producer's horses. WS John Peter inspected the area and located one of the depredated foals (loss valued at \$500). WS Peter placed trail snares in the vicinity of the carcass and on December 6<sup>th</sup>, trail snared the 120 pound offending male lion. The livestock producer was pleased with the response and the results. WS Peter is an expert at catching depredating lions with ground equipment and will continue to protect livestock in his vast work area.



On Saturday December 10<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted aerial operations around six calving areas in Humboldt and Pershing Counties. During the flight, the aerial crew removed a total of 24 coyotes, with many of the coyotes located in the middle of the calving areas. WS Doug Koepke and DS Jack Spencer provided ground support during the aerial operation. WS Koepke sight shot two additional coyotes that were eluding the aircrew in the calving areas. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

During the week of December 5<sup>th</sup> thru December 9<sup>th</sup>, CM VanderMay conducted routine trapping activities on a small ranch in Humboldt County that experienced some livestock losses. The property was not conducive for aerial work, so the diverse CM VanderMay lent his expertise to the situation. CM VanderMay removed three coyotes by utilizing leghold traps. The livestock producer was very pleased with CM VanderMay's protection efforts. Aside from being an excellent aerial gunner, CM VanderMay is an excellent trapper.

On December 12<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted aerial operations around a cattle producer in Lander County who had lost one calf (valued at \$500). The aerial crew removed a total of five offending coyotes around this particular calving area. WS George Hansen provided valuable ground support during aerial operations. To date, no further livestock losses have been reported.

During the week of December 12<sup>th</sup> thru December 16<sup>th</sup>, Pilots Gossard and Mark Connors, IP Keogh and CM VanderMay, flew calving and winter sheep bands in Humboldt, Pershing and Lander Counties. During the week, over 100 coyotes were removed by the highly effective aerial crews. IP Keogh performed training for Pilot Conner and the West District experienced the rare occasion of two aerial crews flying simultaneously. WSs Peter and Hansen and DS Spencer provided ground support and located approximately 30% of the coyotes from the ground and directed the aerial crew to the coyotes' locations. Our "thanks" go out to IP Keogh for conducting the aerial training in Winnemucca as it helped livestock producers in the immediate vicinity.



On December 19<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted aerial operations, in Humboldt County. A cattle producer reported large groups of coyotes that had moved in around his calving

area. During the flight, a total of 21 coyotes were removed. WS Peter provided ground support, during the aerial operations. To date, no further livestock losses have been reported.

On December 21<sup>st</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted aerial operations around several winter sheep bands, in Pershing County. The aerial crew arrived at the sheep bands, right at good light, and saw two coyotes feeding on a freshly killed ewe (loss valued at \$250). The aerial crew flew around all the wintering sheep bands, resulting in the removal of five coyotes. WS Peter and WS Koepke provided ground support, during the aerial operations. No additional sheep losses were reported, however, once the sheep bands move to another location they will no doubt attract additional coyote predation.



During the month of December, WS Ben Miller was busy trail snaring coyotes around deer wintering areas on the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) Washoe County Mule Deer project (hunt unit 014). Even with the absence of snow this year, many mule deer still migrate to their traditional wintering areas and naturally, the coyotes follow. During the month, WS Miller hiked many miles in roadless areas placing equipment and calling, which resulted in the removal of 18 coyotes. WS Miller removed several older coyotes by mimicking deer vocalization sounds to specifically target coyotes that know what a deer in distress sounds like. WS Miller will continue to protect mule deer and bighorn sheep in this area.

During the month of December, WS Peter was busy placing equipment around calving areas and winter sheep bands in northern Nevada. WS Peter had many requests from ranchers and local sheriff's offices about lions killing horses; feral dogs killing calves; and of course coyotes killing calves and sheep. To service more than one damage location, in areas often hundreds of miles apart, WS Peter primarily utilized: M-44's for canids, and trail snares for canids and lions. During the month, WS Peter removed 49 coyotes, six feral dogs and one male lion, that was previously mentioned. Three ranchers informed DS Spencer of the quality of protection effort that WS Peter provides. WS Peter will continue to protect livestock in his large work area.

During the month of December, DS Spencer returned to the field to cover for his vacant trapper position. DS Spencer had three livestock producers in Lyon County that were losing sheep to coyote predation. In response, DS Spencer placed trail snares and leghold traps at the ranches and utilized ranch hands and cooperators to help check his equipment. During the two week period, DS Spencer removed nine coyotes and called and shot an older coyote. Before DS Spencer was a supervisor, he was a trapper in Oregon, then Nevada, removing offending predatory wildlife. DS Spencer will continue to fill in for his vacant position.



During the month of December, WS Hansen was busy running ground equipment, in Lander County. WS Hansen has had several requests for assistance from cattle producers this month and while DS Spencer was conducting a routine "ride along" with WS Hansen, a livestock producer expressed his "thanks" for all the hard work that WS Hansen provides. During the month, WS Hansen removed a total of 41 coyotes by utilizing trail snares, leghold traps and call shooting. WS Hansen will continue to pro-



vide excellent protection efforts for his many livestock cooperators.

During the month of December, Wildlife Biologist (WB) Zack Bowers received two reports of problem coyotes at a military installation in Lyon County. The first report was a complaint of missing pets (cats and small dogs) from base housing. The second report came from security who reported an aggressive coyote hanging around the south gate which had actually been stalking one of the delivery truck drivers in one instance. WB Bowers already had equipment placed in the vicinity of the reports and removed two coyotes from the area which resolved the problem. WB Bowers is currently conducting a Wildlife Hazard Assessment (WHA) at the military installation and will continue to monitor the situation.



Also during the month of December, WB Bowers was asked to attend a meeting on behalf of Operations at the above mentioned military installation. The meeting involved updating the military installation's Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP). Having gone through the old INRMP WB Bowers feels that it addresses Bird Animal Strike Hazard (BASH) fairly well, and should not conflict with the WHA unless main components are changed considerably. WB Bowers will strive to remain involved in issues that could possibly have an effect on BASHs.

Throughout the month of December, Wildlife Biologist (WB) Luke Barto continued to protect aviation safety at a local airport, removing one European starling and non-lethal translocation of one red tail hawk. Red tail hawks often tower over vast areas of open land that is commonly found at airports while in search of prey species, and are a direct threat to arriving and departing aircraft.



In addition to removal of hazardous wildlife to aircraft, non-lethal harassment techniques are utilized to dissuade threats to aviation safety. WB Barto dispersed: 18 Canada geese, two red tail hawks, 50 rock doves and 100 European starlings throughout the month of December.

During the week of December 5<sup>th</sup>, WB Barto received a call concerning property damage to residential housing, caused by a woodpecker. WB Barto conducted a site visit and confirmed that the damage was caused by a northern flicker. WB Barto set equipment and returned several times over the next couple weeks before finally removing the offending flicker, bringing the damage to an end.

WB Barto continued wildlife surveys for the Army Corps funded project during the reporting period.

## New and Developing Methods

Nothing to Report.



## **Valuing and Investing in Employees**

Nothing to Report.

## **Information and Communication**

On December 1<sup>st</sup>, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen and WS Fry attended the N-1 BLM Grazing Board Meeting in Elko, Nevada. The meeting went very well.

On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, SD Jensen attended the NDOW Commission Meeting in Reno, NV

On December 6<sup>th</sup>, SD Jensen attended the Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDOA) Board Meeting in Reno, NV.

## **Emerging Trends/Issues**

Nothing to Report.

## **Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights (EEO/CR)**

Nothing to Report.

## **Future Meetings and Events**

January 18<sup>th</sup>, Sage Grouse Coordination Meeting in Carson City. SD Jensen to attend.



USDA APHIS

# Wildlife Services



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