

February 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

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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 February, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **8.5** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$59** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed. Additionally, WS assisted **131** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$18,200** in damage and WS Specialists verified another **\$9,425** in damage to other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During February, coyotes accounted for **\$8,625** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **432** 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 February, **77** samples were processed.

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

Resource Protection

State Office

During February, 2011, the State Office trap loaning program checked out **10** cage traps. The species distribution for the traps loaned out were: raccoons (**4**), bobcats (**1**) and striped skunks (**5**). 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

During the week of February 1st, Assistant District Supervisor (ADS) Sam Sanders operated as a Crew Member (CM) for a helicopter in a project to help protect mule deer populations from excessive coyote predation in northern Nevada.

On February 3rd, the Elko plane, crewed by Pilot Ken Baer and CM Wayne Rowley, flew several ranches in Elko County. Last year, coyotes killed many calves in the area. In an effort to reduce losses this coming spring calving season, the aerial operation removed 20 coyotes from around the cattle and calving grounds. Wildlife Specialist (WS) Derril Fry provided ground support for the operation. No further losses have been reported.



On February 7th, CM Rowley visited a large sheep and cattle ranch in Elko County. The sheep herder had reported that two lambs, valued at \$200, were killed by ravens. Ravens routinely peck the eyes and the orifices of newborn livestock. On the 9th, CM Rowley removed 40 ravens utilizing a selective avicide to resolve the conflict. The sheep producer was glad to have the help.

On February 13th, WS Billy Conant received a report concerning the loss of one adult ewe, valued at \$150. The next morning WS Conant responded to the location in Lincoln County and confirmed that the ewe had been killed by coyotes. WS Conant placed several trail snares and traps near the kill site. Over the next week or so, WS Conant was able to remove three coyotes with snares and one coyote with traps, bringing the damage to an end. The sheep producer was very pleased with WS Conant's quick response to the situation. No further losses have been reported.

On February 14th, WS Scott Little verified the loss of two adult sheep, valued at \$300, to coyote predation. The sheep were trailing north toward the lambing grounds in White Pine County when the predation occurred. WS Little utilized his horse and well trained dogs to remove one adult female coyote near the kills. No further losses have been reported. Technical assistance was also provided to help prevent future losses.



CM Taylor and WS Spires

During the week of February 14th, a sheep producer in northeast White Pine County reported the loss of five adult ewes, valued at \$750. WS Matt Spires responded to the remote location, confirmed that the damage was caused by coyotes and set several trail snares to meet the depredating coyotes. Within several days, WS Spires removed four coyotes from the snares. WS Spires also requested that the Ely plane respond to the location. On February 17th, the Ely plane, crewed by Instructor Pilot (IP) Tim Keogh and CM Jerred Taylor responded to the request. During the morning's flight, the plane was able to remove an additional two coyotes. No further losses have been reported.

During the week of February 21st, CM Rowley and WS Spires traveled to

Cedar City, Utah to maintain their crew member certification. The following week, ADS Sanders traveled to Cedar City to maintain his State Field Crew Member Trainer certification and his Crew Member certification. Maintaining certification allows for a certified Crew Member to be available at most times for the Nevada Wildlife Services' aerial component for both rotary and fixed wing aircraft.

On February 23rd, the Ely plane, crewed by IP Keogh and CM Jerred Taylor, responded to eastern Elko County. WS Gilbert Temoke had confirmed the loss of at least ten adult ewes to coyote predation. The value of the sheep was placed at \$1500. This area of Nevada is not known for high coyote numbers, but the coyotes that are there cause a significant amount of damage. During the morning's flight, the plane spotted two coyotes that had just killed a ewe and were starting to feed on it. Both coyotes were promptly removed. One additional coyote was also removed near the sheep. WS Temoke has been very busy protecting eleven bands of sheep in the area just south of Wendover, Nevada.



WS Virgil Fullerton reported that no losses occurred in his area, during the month of February. This is a testament to both WS Fullerton's work ethic as well as the assistance provided by the Ely aircrew. Several flights, during the month of February, resulted in the removal of several coyotes in and around the sheep. One of the sheep producers was so pleased with the assistance provided by Wildlife Services, that on February 14th, he stopped by the East District Office and expressed his gratitude.

February was a busy month for WS Dayne Barnes. WS Barnes is working on a Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) project in the Delamar Mountain Range, protecting mostly mule deer and desert bighorn sheep. During the past several weeks, WS Barnes has utilized traps, snares, call boxes, calling and shooting to remove two lions, and more than twenty coyotes from the Delamar Mountains. WS Barnes is also utilizing his two mules, several well trained hounds and eight trail cameras to help identify potential predator problems. Work is ongoing.



During February, Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler and MLS Casey Shields successfully removed two lions (one large tom and a female) from Mount Moriah in eastern White Pine County with the use of mules, snow mobiles and their well trained hounds. One Rocky Mountain Bighorn ewe was found that had been killed by the lions. The depredating lions were skinned and turned into NDOW as required. MLS Buhler and MLS Shields also traveled to the Virgin Mountains and the Gold Butte Mountains in south eastern Nevada to check for potential predator issues prior to an upcoming desert bighorn sheep release planned for the area. No lion sign was found during the week and a half that both MLS's were in the area.



West District

During the week of February 1st thru February 4th, West District Supervisor Jack Spencer Jr., WS John Peter, and WS Billy Taylor converged on an NDOW mule deer project in northern Humboldt County (hunt unit 031). A contract helicopter crew flew areas identified by an NDOW biologist where large herds of mule deer reside in the protection area. During the flights, a total of 148 coyotes were removed. Many of these coyotes were found within close proximity of mule deer. Furthermore, many of the removed coyotes were older coyotes because they howled back to the ground crews. Ground crews are very helpful in locating these territorial coyotes. ADS Sanders was the aerial gunner during the protection efforts.



During the week of February 1st thru February 4th, Pilot Wes Gossard and CM Brandon VanderMay conducted an early morning operation around several calving areas in Humboldt County. The ranchers reported that two large groups of coyotes were seen hanging around the vulnerable calves. During the flight, the aerial crew removed one group of six coyotes and one group of five coyotes. A total of 13 coyotes were eventually removed around both calving areas. WS Peter provided ground support during the aerial operation. The livestock producers were pleased with the protection efforts and to date, no further coyote problems have been reported.



During the week of February 7th thru February 11th, WS Ben Miller was busy placing lion and coyote trail snares around several herds of mule deer located on the Washoe County mule deer project (hunt unit 014). The deep snows had pushed both mule deer and coyotes into a relatively small area, which provide optimal conditions for WS Miller to target offending predators. On February 11th, WS Miller removed a large 130 pound male lion that had moved in close to the winter deer herd by using trail snares. This is the 35th lion removed from the mule deer protection area in the past several years. During the past week, WS Miller also removed 13 coyotes with trail snares. WS Miller will continue to monitor these winter herds of mule deer.



On February 14th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay responded to a cow calf operation that reported the loss of two calves, valued at \$1,200, to coyotes. WS Peter arrived at the calving area before daylight and located several of the coyotes before the arrival of the air crew. When the air crew arrived at first light, WS Peter pointed out the locations of the coyotes and the air crew promptly removed the offending coyotes. A total of nine coyotes were removed. A good ground crew and air crew can maximize protection efforts.



On February 15th, Wildlife Biologist (WB) Luke Barto conducted an early morning starling project on a large feedlot in Lyon County. The feedlot producer reported that the non native starlings had consumed several thousand dollars in livestock feed consumption and the vast amounts of bird fecal matter made working conditions hazardous for employees. WB Barto solved the conflict by removing an estimated 3,100 starlings (roughly 99% of the depredating birds). The cooperater only reported seeing six birds after the bird abatement project. WB Barto has become an expert on starling removal at feedlots.



Throughout the month of February, WB Barto continued protection of aviation safety at a local airport, removing three striped skunks, two raccoons, two feral cats, and one yellow bellied marmot. The feral cats were turned over to Washoe County Animal Control.

On February 15th thru February 16th, Wildlife Disease Biologist (WDB) Zack Bowers initiated California bighorn sheep protection efforts on the Virginia Mountains in southern Washoe County. WDB Bowers located several bighorn sheep populations and began placing trail snares in lion travel corridors at specific locations around the vulnerable relocated bighorn sheep populations. WDB Bowers will continue to place equipment out and check equipment a couple days a week to reduce lion predation of bighorn sheep.



WS Peter has been busy running his M-44 line this past year on lambing ranges and calving areas throughout his work area in Humboldt County. The M-44 device works great in remote areas, devoid of people and dogs, when freezing temperatures hamper the use of other more conventional ground equipment such as leg-hold traps. WS Peter has removed over 100 coyotes this year by utilizing the highly effective M-44 device. WS Peter will continue to place M-44's out in his work area.



On February 23rd, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay were notified by WS George Hansen that a cattle producer from Lander County had lost three calves, valued at \$1,800, to coyotes. During the flight, a total of 19 coyotes were removed in a relatively small area. The air crew reported that "The coyotes just kept squirting out of the brush near the newborn calves". WS George Hansen provided ground support during the aerial operation. The ranch owner watched the air crew conduct protection efforts and was amazed at the number of coyotes inhabiting the area around his calving area. Livestock protection efforts are ongoing.

On February 22nd, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an aerial operation around several sheep bands and calving areas in Humboldt County. During the early morning flight, a total of 15 coyotes were removed. WS Peter provided ground support for the aerial operation.



During the week of February 22nd thru February 25th, WS George Hansen was busy placing ground equipment out around several calving and lambing areas in Lander County. During the week, WS George Hansen removed a total of five coyotes by utilizing leghold traps; M-44's and trail snares. WS George Hansen will continue to protect livestock in his work area.

During the week of February 22nd thru February 25th, WS Doug Koepke continued to run ground equipment around several winter sheep bands and calving areas in Pershing and Churchill Counties. During the week, WS Koepke removed a total of six coyotes with M-44's and trail snares. WS Koepke will continue to protect livestock in his large work area.

During the week of February 22nd thru February 25th, WS Eric Hansen was busy working several sheep and cattle ranches in Lyon County. WS Eric Hansen's largest sheep producer has just started with spring lambing and with the onset of the lambing period, hungry coyotes are starting to filter into the young vulnerable lambs. During the week, WS Eric Hansen removed three coyotes with trail snares. To date, no lambs have been lost and WS Eric Hansen will work diligently to ring his protected resources with ground equipment.



Information and Communication

On February 9th, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen attended the Nevada State Legislature Meeting in Carson City.

Emerging Trends/Issues

During the past 12 months, the Nevada Wildlife Services Program (NWSP) has been analyzing its Predator Damage Management program as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA requires federal agencies evaluate environmental impacts into their decision making processes and ensures that environmental information is available to public officials and citizens before decisions are made and actions are taken. To fulfill this responsibility, Wildlife Services (WS) prepares analyses of the environmental effects of program activities. As time marches forward, so does change, which is why it is important to analyze for change in what we do, how we do it, and how it ties in to the work that federal, State and tribal management agencies conduct. One very important benefit of the NEPA process is that it provides a mechanism for the above mentioned agencies and the public to participate in the analysis, thereby ensuring that our agency makes fully informed program decisions. At this point of the process, we are reviewing and addressing comments that we received from the public and activist groups.

Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights (EEO/CR)

Nothing to Report.

Future Meetings and Events

March 1st and March 11th Nevada State Legislature Meeting in Carson City. SD Jensen to attend.

USDA APHIS

Wildlife Services



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