

March 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 March, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **9.5** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$132** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed. Additionally, WS assisted **213** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$25,575** in damage and WS Specialists verified another **\$34,375** in damage to other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During March, coyotes accounted for **\$13,450** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **639** 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 March, **57** samples were processed.

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

## Resource Protection

### State Office

During March, 2011, the State Office trap loaning program checked out **15** cage traps. The species distribution for the traps loaned out were: raccoons (**6**), ground squirrels (**5**) and striped skunks (**4**). 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 March 1<sup>st</sup>, a cattle rancher in Nye County reported the loss of two calves, valued at \$1,000, to coyote predation. On at least two occasions, the Ely plane, crewed by Instructor Pilot (IP) Tim Keogh and Crew Member (CM) Matt Spires, responded to the location. A total of seven coyotes were removed including one by the ground crew. Protection efforts will continue in the area, during the calving season.



During the first week of March, mule deer and antelope protection efforts were conducted in hunt units 074 and 076 near Jackpot, Nevada. The protection efforts are funded by the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) using Heritage monies initiated by the Nevada Alliance for Wildlife (NA4W) based in Elko, Nevada. The result of utilizing a helicopter for a total of five days was the removal of 230 coyotes, with the majority of the coyotes being removed in close proximity to the wintering deer and antelope. During control efforts, 3 freshly coyote depredated mule deer were observed by the aerial crew.

Also during the week of March 1<sup>st</sup>, a rancher reported to CM Wayne Rowley that ravens had caused the death of two of his calves in Elko County. The calves were valued at \$1,000. A couple days later CM Rowley removed 40 ravens by utilizing chicken eggs treated with the registered avicide DRC-1339. The rancher was appreciative of the timely response and no further raven damage was reported.



March saw the start of sage grouse protection efforts in eastern Nevada. Research shows that high concentrations of ravens and other predators can have a negative impact on sage grouse nest success. The protection efforts are being funded by NDOW using Heritage monies initiated by the NA4W. For 2011, several new locations have been identified by NDOW staff for sage grouse protection efforts. Ravens are the primary focus of control, although badgers are also being targeted for the protection of sage grouse. Both ravens and badgers have been documented as sage grouse nest predators in research literature, as well as by our staff.

On March 7<sup>th</sup>, WS Virgil Fullerton confirmed the loss of two adult ewe sheep to coyote predation. On the first kill, WS Fullerton set several pieces of ground equipment near the kill, which captured one adult male with a foot hold trap. At the other location, WS Fullerton was able to sight shoot a large male coyote at the kill, bringing both depredations to an end. The value of the two ewes was placed at \$300. No further losses have been reported and the sheep producer was very pleased with the results.



On March 8<sup>th</sup>, a rancher reported to CM Rowley, that coyotes had killed a calf, valued at \$500. In response, the following couple days found CM Rowley removing two coyotes by calling and shooting; and one coyote with the use of snares.

Also on March 8<sup>th</sup>, a sheep rancher reported to WS Derril Fry, that one of his sheep, valued at \$200, had been killed by coyotes. The following day the Ely plane, crewed by IP Keogh and CM Spires, flew the sheep and removed five coyotes from the area, three being close to the sheep. WS Fry provided ground support for the aerial operation. No further losses have been reported.

On March 10<sup>th</sup>, WS Gilbert Temoke verified that two ewes, valued at \$400, were killed by coyotes in eastern Elko County. The following week WS Temoke removed two coyotes with trail snares. No further losses have been reported.

On March 11<sup>th</sup>, after receiving a report that a calf, valued at \$600, had been killed by ravens, WS Fry removed 30 ravens by utilizing a registered avicide. This did not stop the killing. Another four calves, valued at \$2,400, and a cow, valued at \$1,400, were reported killed a couple days later. On March 21<sup>st</sup>, CM Rowley removed another 40 ravens with a follow up treatment of DRC-1339. No further losses have been reported.



On March 15<sup>th</sup>, a sheep producer in eastern White Pine County reported the loss of one lamb to raven predation. Ravens have been well documented killing newborn lambs and calves by pecking out the eyes, anal orifices and umbilical cords. On March 16<sup>th</sup>, WS Billy Conant responded to the location and confirmed that ravens had indeed killed the lamb. Several ravens were observed standing near other young lambs. To resolve the conflict, WS Conant placed out 30 eggs treated with DRC-1339. No further problems have been reported. Technical assistance was also provided in an effort to help reduce future deprecations.

During the week of March 21<sup>st</sup>, mule deer protection efforts were conducted in hunt unit 222 and 231 in White Pine and Lincoln Counties. Utilizing a helicopter, 28 coyotes were removed. Unfortunately, poor weather conditions only allowed two days of flying. All coyotes removed were on winter and fawning grounds that had been identified by NDOW biologists.

On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, a call was received in the East District Office concerning the loss of two calves to coyote predation. The value of the calves was placed at \$900. WS Fullerton responded to the location and confirmed that the calves had been killed by coyotes. WS Fullerton placed several pieces of ground equipment near the kills. WS Fullerton also requested the assistance of the air crew.

The Elko plane was down for a couple weeks this March getting a new engine installed after 2000 hours of operations. After getting the Elko airplane back on March 25<sup>th</sup> Pilot Ken Baer and ADS Sam Sanders flew several ranches in Elko County that had reported calf damage and losses to coyotes. The Elko plane removed 16 coyotes from the around the cows and calves, in an effort to prevent further losses. The Elko plane is continuing to fly on ranches that have reported calf losses to coyotes this calving season.



On March 28<sup>th</sup>, the Ely plane crewed by IP Keogh and CM Spires responded to WS Fullerton's above request for assistance. In less than an hour, three adult coyotes were removed. No further

losses have been reported and WS Fullerton continues to monitor the area for future problems.

On March 28<sup>th</sup>, a large ranch in Elko County contacted ADS Sanders and reported that ravens had consumed a significant portion of a calf, valued at \$500, which succumbed over the weekend. The ranch tried many non-lethal techniques to reduce losses to ravens but were unsuccessful. On March 29<sup>th</sup>, ADS Sanders removed 40 ravens from around the calves with a DRC-1339 treatment project.

On March 29<sup>th</sup>, the Elko plane, crewed by Pilot Baer and CM Rowley, flew several ranches in Elko County. Prior to the flight, one ranch reported that one calf, valued at \$500, was killed by coyotes. Several other ranches reported coyotes in the cows and calves in more than typical numbers. The plane removed 20 coyotes from around the cows and calves. ADS Sanders provided ground support on several ranches on one side of a mountain while WS Temoke provided ground support on the other side of the mountain.

During March, WS Dayne Barnes continued mule deer and desert bighorn sheep protection efforts (from lions and coyotes) in hunt unit 241. WS Barnes has been busy setting ground equipment and call boxes in the Delamar Mountain Range. WS Barnes is also utilizing eight trail cameras to help identify possible predator problems and extend his monitoring.



WS Spires and WS Scott Little both reported very few problems during March. Weather conditions made livestock protection efforts very difficult, but both employees stayed busy removing coyotes in preparation for lambing and calving seasons.

During March, WS Billy Taylor worked both as ground crew for the helicopter and fixed wing and also conducted raven counts and protection efforts for the Greater Sage Grouse. WS Billy Taylor will continue to work six days a week through the sage grouse nesting season.

CM Jerred Taylor had a very busy March. CM Jerred Taylor not only worked with the Ely plane, but also served as the crew member on three different occasions for the helicopter during mule deer protection projects in Elko, White Pine and Lincoln Counties. CM Jerred Taylor also helped with raven control efforts during the times he was not flying. CM Jerred Taylor's extra effort this spring has been a great asset to the Nevada Wildlife Services Program.

During the end of March, WS Temoke transitioned to his spring country where several sheep ranchers will be running lamb bands. WS Temoke has been placing equipment to remove coyotes from the area, prior to the sheep arriving.

## **West District**

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, WS John Peter inspected the M-44 units that he had placed around a calving area the week prior in Humboldt County. This particular calving area had lost two calves, valued at \$1,200. During his weekly M-44 inspection, WS Peter removed a total of eight coyotes. WS Peter will continue to protect livestock in this area.

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, IP Keogh and CM Brandon VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around a calving area that had previously experienced some calf losses caused by coyotes in Lander County. The aerial crew had just entered the calving area when they discovered four coyotes feeding on a freshly killed calf, valued at \$600. The aerial crew removed these four coyotes and

continued on flying the rest of the calving area. During the flight, a total of 17 coyotes were removed. No further livestock losses have been reported.

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, a livestock producer from Humboldt County reported that four calves, valued at \$2,400, had been killed by coyotes. On March 4<sup>th</sup>, IP Keogh and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning hunt around the calving areas and within the first 10 minutes of flying they removed 10 coyotes that were feeding on dead calves.

The aerial crew continued searching the area around the calving area which resulted in the removal of 21 coyotes for the day's flight. WS Doug Koepke provided ground support during aerial operations. The West District thanks IP Keogh for coming over and helping our livestock cooperators out while Pilot Wes Gossard was away.



During the week of March 7<sup>th</sup> thru March 11<sup>th</sup>, WS George Hansen was busy running leghold traps, trail snares and M-44's around several calving areas in Lander County. During the week, WS George Hansen removed a total of six coyotes. WS George Hansen reported minimal livestock losses in his area during the reporting period.

On March 9<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an aerial operation around several lamb bands in Lyon County. During an extensive search around the lambing grounds, the aerial crew removed two coyotes. The cooperator reported no livestock losses and WS George Hansen provided ground support during aerial operations.

On March 11<sup>th</sup>, District Supervisor (DS) Jack Spencer hiked several miles into the Virginia Mountains (NDOW Project 20) to place trail snares near an augmented bighorn sheep population. DS Spencer and Wildlife Disease Biologist (WDB) Zack Bowers have been protecting this important bighorn sheep population along with their other duties. One lion had passed through the area of the sheep and now, with equipment placed out, if the lion decides to move in around the sheep, it will likely be captured.

On Saturday March 12<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay flew a lambing range in Humboldt County. During the flight, a total of six coyotes were removed. WS Peter located several of the coyotes for the aerial crew by voice howling. Protection efforts will continue.

On March 17<sup>th</sup>, WS Peter returned to a calving area that had experienced a rash of calf losses by coyotes in Humboldt County. The high winds, snow and freezing temperatures made every tool less effective for coyote removal except for the M-44 device. Upon inspection, WS Peter removed eight coyotes for the day with the M-44 device. WS Peter will continue to utilize the highly effective M-44 device.

On March 17<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation on several bands of sheep in Washoe County. During the flight, a total of two coyotes were removed. DS Spencer provided ground support.



On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay flew on a sheep producer in Pershing County who had reported that two ewes, valued

at \$400, had been killed by coyotes. During the flight, a total of nine coyotes were removed. WS Koepke provided ground support during aerial operations. No further livestock losses have been reported.

On March 13<sup>th</sup>, CM VanderMay was busy placing trail snares around a calving area in Humboldt County. CM VanderMay removed two offending coyotes by trail snares and placed out additional equipment. CM VanderMay is not only a great aerial gunner, but also a good coyote trapper. CM VanderMay will continue to protect livestock from the air and the ground.

During the week of March 14<sup>th</sup> thru March 18<sup>th</sup>, WS George Hansen was busy running trail snares, leghold traps and M-44's around several calving and lambing areas in Lander County. During the week, WS George Hansen removed a total of seven coyotes. WS George Hansen will continue to protect livestock in his work area.

During the week of March 14<sup>th</sup> thru March 18<sup>th</sup>, WS Koepke was busy responding to raven damage on several calving areas in Humboldt, Washoe and Pershing Counties. WS Koepke placed treated egg baits around the raven damage sites and removed a total of 40 ravens. WS Koepke will monitor the situation to ensure the livestock losses cease.

On Sunday March 27<sup>th</sup>, a sheep producer reported that at least 40 sheep had been killed by a lion in northern Washoe County. WS Koepke responded to the call and confirmed that a "whole bunch of lions were killing sheep". WS Koepke placed leghold traps and trail snares around the big piles of dead sheep. During the next few days, WS Koepke trapped and snared six offending lions including three older females. Four of the offending lions were caught under the same tree!



When it was all said and done, the offending lions had unfortunately killed 52 lambs and 12 ewes, valued at \$10,240. WS Koepke did a very good job stopping the livestock damage.

During the week of March 21<sup>st</sup> thru March 25<sup>th</sup>, WS George Hansen was busy placing and checking equipment around several lamb bands in Lander County. During the week, WS George Hansen removed a total of eight coyotes by utilizing leghold traps, trail snares and M-44's. WS George Hansen will continue to protect livestock in his work area.



On March 31<sup>st</sup>, WS Koepke checked equipment around a lamb band that has had ongoing livestock losses to both coyotes and lions. WS Koepke inspected several trail snares placed around a lamb band and removed two large male lions. The largest lion was estimated to weigh nearly 170 pounds. This is the eighth lion WS Koepke has captured with ground equipment over the past week (all within Hunt Unit 015). The livestock producer was very pleased with WS Koepke's livestock protection efforts and called DS Spencer to pass an "Atta Boy" on to Mr. Koepke.

During the month of March, WDB Bowers continued to monitor bighorn sheep in the Virginia Mountains of Washoe County. WDB Bowers has located several groups of bighorn sheep and has been looking for evidence of lions using the area. WDB Bowers has located an area being used by a lion in close proximity to the bighorn sheep and has placed



equipment in the area. WDB Bowers is also monitoring for the presence of feral goats which have been a disease concern to these bighorn sheep in years past.

Throughout the month of March, Wildlife Biologist (WB) Luke Barto continued protection of aviation safety at a local airport by removing: 39 marmots, four ground squirrels, two pigeons, two striped skunks, one raccoon and one muskrat. Removal of prey base species such as marmots and squirrels reduces the attraction to large predatory birds and mammals that are aviation safety concerns. Removal of marmots, squirrels and raccoons also reduces the damage to electrical wiring, as rodents and raccoons will often cause damage to electrical wires.



Also during the month of March, WB Barto continued work on a United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) funded project. The project involves analyzing pre-existing conditions as it pertains to wildlife hazards to aviation safety, conducting wildlife-use observational surveys and providing recommendations to the Corps to prevent/reduce adverse affects to local aviation safety.



Also during the month of March, WB Barto removed 25 ravens found congregating around a local feedlot in Lyon County. Predation by ravens is common with newborn livestock, often pecking the eyes and orifices which ultimately leads to death. On March 15<sup>th</sup>, WB Barto removed the offending ravens utilizing an avicide.

Also during the month of March, WB Barto received a call in regard to raccoons causing damage to a local resident's lawn. Raccoons will often uproot sod in search of grubs and worms when available. WB Barto set equipment and removed the offending raccoons the following day.

#### Information and Communication

On March 1<sup>st</sup> and March 11<sup>th</sup>, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen attended the Nevada State Legislature Meeting in Carson City.

#### Emerging Trends/Issues

Nothing to Report.

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

Nothing to Report.

#### Future Meetings and Events

April 28<sup>th</sup>, N-3 Grazing Board Meeting in Fallon. DS Spencer and SD Jensen to attend. April 29<sup>th</sup>, N-4 Grazing Board Meeting in Ely. DS Bennett and SD Jensen to attend.



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# Wildlife Services



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