

May 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 May, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **8.7** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$39** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and **\$35** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **626** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$15,675** in damage and WS Specialists verified another **\$18,410** in damage to other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During May, coyotes accounted for **\$13,485** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **253** 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 May, **75** samples were processed.

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

## Resource Protection

### State Office

During May, 2011, the State Office trap loaning program checked out **19** cage traps. The species distribution for the traps loaned out were: raccoons (**3**), ground squirrels (**15**) and striped skunks (**1**). 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.



On April 31<sup>st</sup>, Wildlife Specialist (WS) Matt Spires received a call concerning the loss of five lambs, valued at \$625. WS Spires traveled to the location in northern White Pine County and confirmed that coyotes were responsible for the losses. To resolve the conflict, WS Spires set several pieces of ground equipment near the sheep and requested assistance from the Ely air crew. On May 2<sup>nd</sup> and May 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Ely plane, crewed by Instructor Pilot (IP) Tim Keogh and Crew Member (CM) Jerred Taylor, flew WS Spires' area. Two coyotes were removed each day for a total of four. One active den was also observed by the plane and later removed by WS Spires. WS Spires also removed three coyotes, utilizing calling, traps and snares to bring the damage to an end. WS Spires provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.



On May 1<sup>st</sup>, WS Derril Fry received a call concerning the loss of two lambs, valued at \$350. WS Fry traveled to the location in southern Elko County and confirmed that coyotes were responsible for the losses. WS Fry requested the assistance of the Elko air crew and the following morning, the Elko plane, crewed by Pilot Ken Baer and CM Wayne Rowley, responded to the location. During the 2.3 hour flight, the air crew was able to remove three adult coyotes and also locate an active den which was promptly removed by WS Fry. Since lambing season is just beginning, WS Fry will continue to monitor the sheep and remove coyotes as necessary. WS Fry has placed his camp near several bands of sheep that are lambing, in order to provide better protection during lambing.



On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, WS Fry received another call from a sheep producer in southern Elko County. This was the same producer that had contacted WS Fry the day before only this time; coyotes had hit another band of sheep killing two more lambs, valued at \$350. WS Fry again requested the Elko plane. On May 4<sup>th</sup>, the Elko plane, crewed by Pilot Baer and CM Rowley, responded to the request. During four and a half hours of flying, five coyotes were removed, including three coyotes in the band of sheep that was experiencing the damage. WS Fry had also removed two coyotes in the same area utilizing calling and his well trained decoy dogs. WS Fry also provided technical assistance in an effort to help minimize future losses while he continues to protect sheep during lambing season.

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, WS Scott Little confirmed the loss of two lambs, valued at \$350. The depredation occurred in a remote portion of western White Pine County. Since this location has had very high losses in past years, WS Little had already placed more than 100 traps and snares around the lambing area. During the next several days, WS Little was able to remove five coyotes with this equipment. On May 11<sup>th</sup>, WS Little also removed a pair of coyotes and an active den near the sheep utilizing his horse, calling and his well trained decoy dogs. WS Little has been working this area for just over seven years. Prior to WS Little's arrival, extremely high sheep losses were common. One sheep producer reported

that he was on the verge of going out of business but has been able to continue his sheep operation solely due to WS Little's hard work and dedication.

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, WS Spires received a call concerning a problem with ravens attacking newborn lambs. WS Spires traveled to the remote location in northern White Pine County and confirmed that ravens had killed at least seven lambs, valued at \$1,225. The following day, WS Spires placed out 60 hard boiled eggs treated with DRC-1339. A follow-up visit confirmed that the damage had been brought to an end. WS Spires also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future raven problems. No further losses have been reported.



On May 5<sup>th</sup>, the Ely plane, crewed by IP Keogh and CM Jerred Taylor, responded to a request for assistance from WS Virgil Fullerton in northwest White Pine County. A band of sheep had recently started lambing and the herders had reported hearing a pair of coyotes near the sheep. With historically high depredation rates in the area, WS Fullerton knew that it was only a matter of time before the coyotes started turning their appetite toward lambs. During the morning's flight, two adult coyotes were removed by the air crew. The sheep producer and herders were very pleased with the results. To date, no losses have been reported on this band of sheep. WS Fullerton will continue to monitor the sheep on a daily basis.

On May 7<sup>th</sup>, a sheep producer in northern White Pine County contacted WS Spires concerning the loss of several lambs to an unknown predator. WS Spires and Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler responded to the location. It was suspected that a lion might be responsible for the kill since fresh tracks were discovered near the sheep. Because the guard dogs had consumed all of the depredated lambs, neither WS Spires nor MLS Buhler was certain of what had killed the lambs. On May 10<sup>th</sup>, all suspicions were confirmed when WS Spires found a partially eaten and covered lamb. WS Spires set several pieces of ground equipment near the kills. The next morning, WS Spires trapped an adult female lion. The total value of the losses was placed at \$875. No further losses have been reported.

On May 10<sup>th</sup>, WS Gilbert Temoke confirmed the loss of two lambs, valued at \$350, were due to coyote predation. On May 12<sup>th</sup>, the Elko plane, crewed by Pilot Baer and CM Rowley, responded to WS Temoke's request for assistance. During the two hour flight, three coyotes were removed near the sheep. WS Temoke also removed several coyotes with ground equipment bringing the damage to an end.

On May 11<sup>th</sup>, Wildlife Biologist (WB) Sam Sanders traveled to a ranch in western Elko and removed five coyotes by utilizing snares, from around the sheep. Four lambs, valued at \$700, were reported killed by coyotes; WB Sanders also verified one lamb, valued at \$175, had been killed by ravens. On the same pivots the sheep were located at, WB Sanders snared two badgers to help protect the farming on the pivots as they were just being planted. Later that day, WB Sanders traveled to three sage grouse leks in northwestern Elko County and protected the sage grouse nests from raven predation by placing DRC-1339 treated egg baits near the leks. WB Sanders removed an estimated 15 ravens.

On May 24<sup>th</sup>, WB Sanders received a report of three lambs, valued at \$525, lost to coyote predation. On May 25<sup>th</sup>, the Elko plane, crewed by Pilot Baer and CM Rowley, responded to the location in

western Elko County. With the assistance of WB Sanders as the ground crew, six coyotes were removed, including three coyotes on fresh kills. WB Sanders utilized howling to help locate several of the coyotes during the flight. WB Sanders has also removed several additional coyotes near the sheep by utilizing ground equipment.

On May 24<sup>th</sup>, the Ely plane, crewed by IP Keogh and CM Jerred Taylor, flew on the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) project 22 in area 22. During the hour and a half flight, the air crew was able to remove three coyotes, including a pair of coyotes that had just killed an antelope fawn. The doe antelope was still trying to defend the predated fawn and chased the two coyotes as the aircrew removed them.

On May 25<sup>th</sup>, WB Sanders received a report concerning the loss of 10 lambs, valued at \$1,750, to coyote predation. WB Sanders has already removed several coyotes by utilizing ground equipment and will continue to run equipment near the sheep. WB Sanders also requested the assistance of the Elko plane to provide further protection. On May 26<sup>th</sup>, the Elko plane, crewed by Pilot Baer and CM Rowley, responded to the location in western Elko County. During the four and half hour flight, with the assistance of WB Sanders acting as the ground crew, the air crew was able to remove nine coyotes and locate one den. The active den was removed by WB Sanders. To date, no further losses have been reported and WB Sanders continues to run equipment and monitor the area.

On May 24<sup>th</sup>, WS Billy Conant, WS Aaron Freund and WS Dayne Barnes traveled to Las Vegas and took the Nevada State Pesticide applicator's test. All three employees passed the test and now are certified in laws and regulations, predatory animals and M-44 use. Congratulations to all three employees for their hard work studying and passing these tests.

During May, raven and badger control efforts have been in high gear in Eastern Nevada. WB Sanders, WS Billy Taylor, WS Freund and District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett have been extremely busy controlling ravens and badgers from around sage grouse leks to protect sage grouse. During the month of May, 16 badgers and 17 coyotes were removed along with many ravens in an effort to help sage grouse nest survival and recruitment in Elko, White Pine and Lincoln Counties. Work will continue until the end of June, when most eggs should have hatched out. The project is funded as an NDOW Heritage project through the Nevada Alliance 4 Wildlife based in Elko, Nevada. Direct communication with NDOW area biologist is ongoing concerning this important project.



During the month of May, WS Barnes removed nine coyotes on NDOW's project 6a, in the Delamar Mountains. WS Barnes is also maintaining six trail cameras and one mountain lion call box throughout the rugged mountain range. WS Barnes has a very large number of both traps and trail snares set in an effort to protect both mule deer and Desert Bighorn Sheep. WS Barnes reported that the region has received above average amounts of precipitation this year and habitat in the area looks to be in excellent condition going into the summer months.

### West District

During the past month, WS Ben Miller placed out nearly 1,000 DRC-1339 treated egg baits around 13 sage grouse leks in Washoe County. WS Miller will continue to protect sage grouse in this area, until the sage grouse nesting season is over. Local research indicates that many female sage grouse nest



within a mile of a lek site.

On Sunday May 1<sup>st</sup>, a sheep producer in Washoe County reported that a lion had killed two lambs, valued at \$340. Because it is vital to try and inspect each lion depredation the day it happens, WS Doug Koepke left immediately to inspect the kill site and determined that coyotes were actually responsible for the livestock death, so leghold traps were placed in the immediate area to capture the offending coyote(s). Protection efforts are ongoing.

On May 5<sup>th</sup>-May 6<sup>th</sup>, DS Jack Spencer Jr. placed out 300 DRC-1339 treated egg baits around several sage grouse lek locations in Lander County. While DS Spencer was placing out treated egg baits, he observed a raven in the distance feeding. DS Spencer inspected the raven feeding location and found small bits of sage grouse egg shells. DS Spencer placed two treated egg baits near the site and upon arrival to the truck saw the offending raven return to the nest and fully consume both treated egg baits. Because the raven had enough room to eat both eggs, DS Spencer theorized that the highly intelligent raven depredated the sage grouse nest the day prior and came back to feed on the remains. A total of 23 ravens were removed. DS Spencer will continue to protect these sage grouse.



On May 6<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Wes Gossard and CM Brandon VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around two sheep producers in Washoe County. WS Koepke arrived near the sheep before daylight, heard a pair of coyotes nearby and shortly thereafter, the aerial crew arrived and promptly removed the pair and located their den. The aerial crew then flew from lamb band to lamb band to see if any coyotes were around the vulnerable lambs. During the flight, a total of six coyotes were removed. Protection efforts are ongoing.

On May 11<sup>th</sup>, DS Spencer and Wildlife Disease Biologist (WDB) Zack Bowers loaded up back packs with trail snares and supplies and spent the next 10 hours hiking into several parts of the Virginia Range (hunt unit 022) to place snares in lion travel corridors that lead toward bighorn sheep. Along the way the duo saw eight bighorn sheep near the location where the snares were set. WDB Bowers also found the remains of a small female bighorn ewe, valued at \$1,500. On one trail, the Biologists found sign where a large male lion was traveling. They noticed that the lion was missing a toe on the right front foot according their tracking expertise. DS Spencer had previously seen the same three toed male track on the south end of the Virginia Range nearly nine miles away, but hadn't seen any more sign of the three toed cat. WDB Bowers placed trail snares, while DS Spencer collected foliage to conceal the non-target exclusion sets. After the sets were placed, it was determined that the depredating lion's days were numbered. WS Bowers will continue to monitor the situation since this lion is living right with the bighorn sheep.

During the month of May, WDB Bowers continued to monitor bighorn sheep in the Washoe County Virginia Mountains. WDB Bowers has located several groups of bighorn sheep and has set trail snares where a lion was found to be using the area. On May 13<sup>th</sup>, WDB Bowers removed a large mature male, which just so happened to be missing a toe on its right front foot, from within close proximity of the bighorn sheep. WDB Bowers is also monitoring for the presence of feral goats which have been a disease concern to these bighorn sheep in years past.

On May 11<sup>th</sup>, WS George Hansen inspected a band of sheep in Lander County and was informed by the herder that 10 ewes, valued at \$2,000, had been killed by a lion. WS George Hansen learned

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that the lion was up in the rocks above the sheep, so with a little help from his dogs, they captured the lion in a thick willow draw. The lion was on the ground growling at him so WS George Hansen promptly removed the offending 120 pound male lion. The rancher was very pleased with WS George Hansen's efforts to remove the lion the same day of the depredations. There have been no additional livestock losses, since the removal of the lion. WS George Hansen has been very successful in capturing depredating lions in his work area. This is the fourth stock killing lion that he has removed in northern Lander County. WS George Hansen will continue to protect livestock in this area.



On May 13<sup>th</sup>, WS Koepke requested assistance from Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay. In the past week, Washoe County sheep ranchers reported the loss of seven lambs, valued at \$1,400, to coyotes. During the early morning flight, the aerial crew removed a total of four coyotes and spotted one coyote den. The livestock damage ceased for the time being but as sheep move into new areas additional livestock losses will inevitably occur. WS Koepke provided ground support during aerial operations.

On May 13<sup>th</sup>, a golf course worker called and reported that he and four workers had startled a large lion near their equipment shed on a rural golf course in Washoe County. The worker mentioned that the lion growled at them, then immediately ran off. DS Spencer provided technical assistance and informed the workers that if they see the lion or its tracks again, then the animal may require removal. Large predatory wildlife have been known to kill and consume humans. Nevada has not lost human life to lions, likely due to the State's management, although California has not been so fortunate.



In the past month, WS Koepke has been busy protecting seven lamb bands in Washoe County placing equipment and removing problem coyotes. During the past month, WS Koepke has also removed 10 coyote dens located near lambing grounds. WS Koepke will continue to protect livestock in his large work area.

On May 16<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around a sheep producer in Lander County. During the flight, a total of seven coyotes were removed by the aerial crew, in addition the aerial crew also located two coyote dens. WS George Hansen provided ground support during the aerial operation. Protection efforts are ongoing around these lamb bands.



On May 17<sup>th</sup> thru May 18<sup>th</sup>, DS Spencer conducted a routine field inspection with Pilot Gossard and WS George Hansen in Humboldt and Lander Counties. DS Spencer will continue to meet with employees and cooperators in the field as time permits.

During the week of May 23<sup>rd</sup> thru May 27<sup>th</sup>, WS Eric Hansen was busy protecting six lamb bands in Lyon County. During the week WS Eric Hansen removed a total of three coyotes by utilizing leghold traps. WS Eric Hansen will continue to protect livestock in his work area.

On May 26<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay arrived near a lamb band in Humboldt County, which had occasional lamb losses. The livestock producer reported the loss of three lambs, valued at \$500, which had been killed by coyotes. During the flight, a total of three coyotes were removed. WS John Peter located the coyotes prior to the plane's arrival and even with rough weather, the aerial crew stuck with it and removed the offending coyotes. No further livestock losses have been reported, since the removal of the coyotes.

During the week of May 23<sup>rd</sup> thru May 27<sup>th</sup>, WS Eric Hansen was busy trying to resolve ongoing livestock losses in Lyon County on a large ranch located along the East Walker River. This ranch is constantly inundated with recurring livestock kills because predatory wildlife follow the river system through the ranch. The recent heavy downpours made tracking conditions impossible to determine which predator was responsible, however, on May 27<sup>th</sup>, WS Eric Hansen trail snared a 300 pound male black bear a few hundred yards from the sheep. Coincidentally, since the removal of the bear, no further livestock losses have occurred. Of interest, the livestock manager of the ranch has guard dogs present, covers any and all dead livestock and has tried his best to use electric fence to discourage predators from entering the property. However, past take data reveals that predators will continually kill livestock even if they have to swim rivers, elude guard dogs and deal with electric fences to secure prey items. WS Eric Hansen will continue to protect livestock on this ranch.

On May 25<sup>th</sup>, a sheep producer from Pershing County reported that three lambs, valued at \$500, had been killed by coyotes. Because WS Koepke was busy protecting lamb bands in Washoe County, it was best determined that the aerial crew would fly the sheep in the next few days. On May 27<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight in the mountains where the livestock damage occurred. During the flight, a total of six coyotes were removed. The aerial crew also spotted one coyote den. WS Koepke provided valuable ground crew efforts by locating several of the coyotes and sent the plane to the coyote's locations. WS Koepke will soon place ground equipment around these bands of sheep in the next few weeks.



On May 31<sup>st</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning operation around several sheep bands in Lander County. WS George Hansen located three coyotes near the sheep for the aerial crew and they promptly removed them. During the flight a total of six coyotes were removed. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

During the month of May, Staff Biologist (SB) Jack Sengl removed: nine coyotes, two raccoons, two striped skunks, and one feral cat with the use of ground equipment to protect pheasants, wild turkeys and their recruitment at the Mason Valley Wildlife Management Area (MVWMA) from depredation. Additionally, an application of DRC-1339 treated egg baits was used to reduce raven depredations at a calving area on the MVWMA. The result of the treatment was the removal of 21 ravens (one was removed by firearm) thereby protecting livestock and wild fowl eggs.

#### New and Developing Methods

Nothing to Report.



### Valuing and Investing in Employees

During May, IP Keogh received a service pin and certificate commemorating his 20<sup>th</sup> year of service in the federal government. IP Keogh is stationed in Ely, Nevada. IP Keogh started his career with Wildlife Services in Idaho as a pilot. A few months later, IP Keogh transferred to Ely, Nevada where he continues to work today. IP Keogh has done an excellent job for the Nevada Wildlife Services Program, the western region and the aerial program. THANKS TIM!



### Information and Communication

On May 5<sup>th</sup>, WB Barto provided Airport Wildlife Hazard Management training in Reno.

On May 14<sup>th</sup>, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen attended the NDOW Commission meeting in Reno.

On May 21<sup>st</sup>, SB Sengl was a guest on the Garden College radio in Reno.

On May 21<sup>st</sup>, SB Sengl entertained the 35 members of the public with a presentation on living with depredate urban wildlife.

### Emerging Trends/Issues

Nothing to Report.

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

Nothing to Report.

### Future Meetings and Events

June 8<sup>th</sup>, Nevada Board of Agriculture Meeting in Reno. SD Jensen to attend.

June 14<sup>th</sup>, N-1 Grazing Board Meeting in Elko. SD Jensen to Attend.

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# Wildlife Services



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