

June 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

775-851-4848

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 June, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **5.7** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$57.5** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and **\$35.5** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **405** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$83,700** in damage and WS Specialists verified another **\$23,200** in damage to other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During June, coyotes accounted for **\$13,795** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **228** 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 June, **34** samples were processed.

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

Resource Protection

State Office

During June, 2011, the State Office trap loaning program checked out **64** cage traps. The species distribution for the traps loaned out were: raccoons (**16**), ground squirrels (**44**), striped skunks (**2**), marmots (**1**) and muskrats (**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.

East District

On June 1st, Wildlife Biologist (WB) Sam Sanders visited a large sheep ranch in Elko County. The sheep herders reported that two lambs, valued at \$350, had been killed by ravens. WB Sanders verified one lamb was indeed killed by ravens. The ravens had pecked out the napping lambs' eyes before the herders could frighten the ravens away. The lamb died soon after. In response to the conflict, WB Sanders removed approximately 28 ravens by conducting a treatment project with the use of the corvid specific avicide DRC-1339. The sheep herders were very appreciative of the help as their harassment approaches were being circumvented by the intuitive ravens.

On June 1st, Wildlife Specialist (WS) Scott Little confirmed the loss of two lambs, valued at \$350, to coyote predation. In response to the depredation, WS Little utilized his horse to access the extremely remote location and set several pieces of ground equipment near the kills. The next day, WS Little rode back into the area and removed one adult male from one of the traps he had set. No further losses have been reported. WS Little also provided technical assistance to help prevent future losses.

On June 6th, WS Matt Spires received a report concerning the loss of two lambs, valued at \$350. WS Spires traveled to the location and confirmed that the loss was due to coyote predation. On June 7th, the Ely plane, crewed by Instructor Pilot (IP) Tim Keogh and Crew Member (CM) Jerred Taylor, responded to the location. During the morning's flight, the aircrew removed two adult coyotes and located an active den near the sheep. WS Spires was able to locate the den and remove it, bringing an end to the predation.

On June 6th, WB Sanders received a call concerning the loss of twelve lambs to mountain lion predation. Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Casey Shields responded to the location later that day and confirmed the loss of fourteen lambs and two adult ewes, valued at \$3,300, to a lion. The sheep producer reported that the sheep arrived on June 4th, and two mornings later, the lion struck. MLS Shields utilized his well trained dogs and mule to pursue and remove an adult, six to seven year old male lion from near the sheep. The lion was in excellent condition and weighed about 150 pounds. MLS Shields skinned the lion and turned it into the Ely Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) Office. No further losses have been reported. The owner of the sheep was very pleased with the quick response provided by Wildlife Services. The removal of this lion no doubt saved many more sheep from predation.



On June 7th, the Ely District Office received a call concerning the loss of twenty-five lambs to coyote predation. On June 9th, the Ely plane, crewed by IP Keogh and CM Jerred Taylor, responded to the location in southwestern Eureka County. With District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett acting as the ground crew, the plane was able to remove two coyotes near the sheep. DS Bennett confirmed that at least thirty lambs, valued at \$6,000, had been killed by coyotes, during the past several weeks. On June 16th, the Ely plane returned and the air crew removed two additional coyotes

from near the sheep. With the loss of both the Eureka and Austin Wildlife Specialist positions, due to prior rounds of State of Nevada budget cuts, higher than normal losses can be expected. Technical assistance was provided in an effort to help reduce future losses.

On June 7th, DS Bennett confirmed the loss of one lamb, valued at \$200, to coyote predation. The location of the damage was on the Lander/Eureka County line in the Simpson Park area. The Ely plane, crewed by IP Keogh and CM Jerred Taylor, responded to the location the following morning and promptly removed four adult coyotes near the sheep. During the next week, the sheep herder reported the loss of one additional lamb to coyote predation. Therefore, DS Bennett removed an additional adult male coyote utilizing calling and shooting and, on June 15th, the Ely plane returned and removed four more coyotes near the sheep. No further losses have been reported and DS Bennett continues to monitor the sheep. Technical assistance was also provided with recommendation to night pen the sheep in an effort to help prevent future losses.

On June 8th, WS Derril Fry received a call concerning the loss of two lambs, valued at \$350. WS Fry traveled to the location and confirmed that coyotes were responsible for the predation. WS Fry was able to call and remove one adult male coyote from near the kills. From the sign, WS Fry further determined more than one coyote was involved in the attacks, so WS Fry requested the assistance of the Elko plane. On June 9th, the Elko plane, crewed by Pilot Ken Baer and CM Wayne Rowley, responded to the location. During that morning's operation, the aircrew removed two adult coyotes and located an active den near the sheep. WS Fry hiked into the location and removed the den. No further losses have been reported from this band of sheep. Technical assistance was provided in the form of non lethal recommendations to help reduce future losses.

On June 12th, WS Little received a call concerning the loss of three lambs, valued at \$450. On June 13th, WS Little traveled to the location in western White Pine County and confirmed that coyotes were responsible for the damage. WS Little spent several days using his horse and well trained coyote decoy dogs searching for the offending coyote. On June 21st, WS Little was able to use his dogs and calling to remove one large male coyote. No further losses have been reported.



On June 20th, WS Fry received a report concerning the loss of two lambs, valued at \$350. WS Fry traveled to the remote location in southern Elko County and confirmed that coyotes were responsible for the predation, then requested the assistance of the Elko plane. On June 21st, the Elko plane, crewed by Pilot Baer and CM Rowley, responded to the location and removed one adult coyote from near the lamb kills. The plane also observed an active coyote den near the sheep and provided the location to WS Fry. WS Fry hiked into the location and removed the den, bringing the damage to an end. About a week later, the sheep producer phoned the East District Office and expressed his appreciation for the work that WS Fry has provided this spring. He said that without the hard work and dedication of WS Fry, his losses would have been much higher. The sheep producer was also thankful for the assistance provided by the Elko plane. The sheep producer reported the highest percentage of lamb crop since he started his operation.

During the week of June 22nd, the Elko plane, crewed by Pilot Baer and acting CM Sanders, flew a large sheep operation in northern Elko County. WS Gilbert Temoke received a report and confirmed the loss of two lambs, valued at \$350, to coyote predation. WS Temoke requested the aerial operation to help stop the losses. The crew removed six coyotes from around the sheep, with WS Temoke as ground support. WS Temoke also removed an additional six coyotes using ground equipment. The sheep producer was very appreciative of the help.

During June, WS Dayne Barnes continued his work on NDOW hunt unit 241. This NDOW project takes place mainly in the Delamar Mountain Range of Lincoln County and is designed to monitor and remove predators to protect desert bighorn sheep, mule deer and other wildlife. Monies collected through the big game draw application process fund this project. WS Barnes removed several coyotes during June, utilizing: trapping, calling, and snaring. WS Barnes also placed out a number of trail cameras at many of the isolated water holes throughout the arid Delamar Range. During the past several weeks, more than 1,100 photos have been taken. The only predators captured to date have been coyotes, bobcat, grey fox and badgers. WS Barnes has also placed a number of trail snares and one call box for mountain lions. No mountain lion sign has been observed but monitoring will continue.



During June, several new GSA trucks arrived in the East District. Five new “Trapper” trucks required installation of flat beds and a horse rack was transferred over to the new MLS truck. Along with the assistance of several vehicle operators and other employees, IP Keogh and CM Jerred Taylor took on the task of swapping out the beds and horse rack. The two employees also removed and installed all six radios while carrying out their normal duties. The extra effort IP Keogh and CM Jerred Taylor provided saved the Nevada Wildlife Service’s program several thousand dollars that can be utilized for equipment for field employees. With tight State and federal budgets, a special thank you goes out to both employees as well as all the others that pitched in to help save money and get the job done.



From left, WS Billy Taylor, CM Jerred Taylor and WS Matt Spires

West District

On June 2nd, WS Ben Miller loaded his backpack with snaring supplies and set out on foot, checking a long snare line that he has devotedly manicured around mule deer and bighorn sheep populations in the Washoe County Mule Deer Project (hunt unit 014). WS Miller was just finishing his loop that evening when he discovered that he had trail snared a large 90 pound female lion that was sharing a rock pile with a small band of bighorn sheep. Bighorn sheep are secondary species that can benefit from the removal of a lion, especially when they’re living only a couple hundred yards from each other. WS Miller has noticed a large increase in bighorn sheep in this protection area since his protection efforts started and this past year NDOW added an additional bighorn sheep sportsman tag for this very unit. WS Miller will continue to protect mule deer and bighorn sheep in his protection area.

During the first week of June, WS Doug Koepke removed three coyote dens from around several bands of sheep in Washoe County. WS Koepke has been working hard in this area to protect sheep from predation by removing coyotes and their dens. WS Koepke will continue to protect livestock in his work area.

During the first few weeks of June, the Truckee Meadows Goose Task Force (represented by NDOW, United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and WS’ Biologist(s), Washoe County Vector Control and a NDOW Volunteer) conducted the 26th annual Canada goose round-up in the Truckee Meadows. The goose round-ups are conducted each spring primarily to reduce the likelihood of a damaging bird strike to the Truckee Meadow’s aviation. It is very unlikely there will ever be a “Miracle on the Truckee” like the famous “Miracle on the Hudson”, so it is very important to reduce the abundance of the Canada geese within five miles of the airports, particularly young of the year, which are most sus-

ceptible to wildlife strikes with aircraft. Regarding secondary benefits of the round-up, there was also an additional \$45,000 worth of goose damage reported by other property owners in Washoe and Carson Counties. If the annual round-ups were not being conducted, this damage would be considerably higher as Canada goose abundance is still showing exponential growth nationally. The Task Force placed drive corral traps out and herded molting (flightless) Canada geese into the traps. The 400+ geese captured were leg banded and translocated by NDOW biologists to wildlife management areas in eastern Nevada. DS Jack Spencer Jr. has been participating in the round-ups for the past 14 years and noticed the lowest number of birds post round-up, of any year to date. The operation went really smoothly and very few birds escaped from the goose wranglers. The roundup was also covered by several TV stations, radio affiliates and newspapers. Of interest, WS' western regional States were presented an award by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for their involvement in protecting aviation safety from wildlife strikes, earlier this year.



On June 5th, WS Koepke responded to a livestock damage complaint in Churchill County. The rancher reported that several golden eagles had taken up residence on his lambing area and killed three lambs, valued at \$550. WS Koepke verified that the lambs were killed by eagles. The cooperator was requested by WS to call the USFWS, as the eagles are protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, which they enforce. Even harassment of an eagle without the proper permit is illegal.

On June 9th, Pilot Wes Gossard and CM Brandon VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around several sheep bands in Lander County. The day prior, WS George Hansen confirmed that coyotes had killed two lambs, valued at \$500. The aerial crew flew to each location and removed all coyotes (seven) that WS George Hansen located. To date no further livestock have been lost.

During the past month WS John Peter has been inspecting the Humboldt County Mule Deer project (hunt unit 031). WS Peter recently placed trail snares and call boxes in areas where mule deer reside to target deer depredating lions. On June 10th, WS Peter inspected a call box-snare combination and discovered that he had captured a 110 pound female lion (within 30 feet of the call box). The female's teeth were worn down, like that of a 12-15 year old lion. WS Peter placed out additional equipment in some remote country around mule deer concentrations. WS Peter will take his mules into some new country soon to place trail snares in travel corridors. WS Peter has trail snared nearly 20 lions in hunt 031 over his long career for mainly livestock protection reasons and is very familiar with lion movement patterns in the area. WS Peter will continue protection efforts.



On June 13th, WS Koepke requested the aerial crew fly around two bands of sheep in Pershing County. These bands of sheep have had continual losses during the past few weeks by coyotes. The aerial crew arrived before daylight and removed one coyote, although it is tough to fly the mountains with the dynamics relating to hot summer temperatures. WS Koepke will be camping with the sheep in the near future to offer better protection.

On June 22nd, Pilot Gossard and VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation on the Washoe County Mule Deer Project (hunt unit 014). WS Miller voice howled from one location to an-

other at a very fast pace to cover as much ground as possible for the aerial crew to locate coyotes. During the morning flight, the aerial crew removed a total of four coyotes. This is a good sign to only find a few coyotes during the height of mule deer fawning season. The aerial crew saw lots of mule deer fawns and at one point saw 10 does with 20 fawns. Research indicates that most mule deer fawns die within their first six weeks and nearly 70% are killed by predators, namely coyotes. WS Miller will continue to protect mule deer in this area.

On June 16th, WS Miller spent the day backpacking around several rocky locations in the Washoe County Mule Deer Project (hunt unit 014). A few days prior WS Miller discovered that a lion had escaped from one of his trail snares because of an experimental breakaway device built into the snare. The breakaway was built into the snare to release a bighorn sheep that has become inadvertently caught in a snare. This is often a challenge when trying to capture lions where bighorn sheep reside. They both like the rock piles and it makes exclusive snaring difficult, however, lions do eat bighorn sheep, so the loss of a single bighorn would be considered small when compared to the take of a specialized sheep killing lion. WS Miller elected to swap out the snare that the lion had broken out of without a breakaway device and discovered on the 16th, that he had successfully re-snared the big male lion. WS Miller checked another somewhat near snare line and discovered a large female lion that was also snared. Later in the day, WS Miller checked another trail snare line and caught yet another large male lion. WS Miller ended the day with three adult lions removed from the protection area. It is unusual to capture three adult lions in such a short amount of time; however, WS Miller has done it several times. This is the 12th lion that WS Miller has removed from the protection area during the past year. Now that the summer heat has kicked in, lions will tend to kill more prey because the meat spoils at a much faster rate and cats prefer fresh meat rather than rotted. WS Miller will continue to protect mule deer in the protection area.



During the week of June 13th thru June 17th, WS Eric Hansen was busy running equipment around several sheep producers in Lyon County. During the week, WS Eric Hansen removed three coyotes by utilizing trail snares and leghold traps. WS Eric Hansen has had very few sheep kills in the past few weeks; however, he has noticed black bear tracks around one particular sheep ranch that has a history of bear damage.

During the month of June, WB Luke Barto received well over 100 urban wildlife related complaints from the Reno/Sparks area. WS Barto provides technical assistance over the phone to citizens to assist them in resolving their human-wildlife conflict issues. Most urban wildlife complaints can be, and are, resolved with non lethal approaches. As time and funding are available, WS Barto responds to the small percentage of urban wildlife conflicts that are beyond the public's ability to safely resolve on their own. WS Barto will continue to provide assistance to people in conflict with wildlife.



During the week of June 20th thru June 24th, WS George Hansen responded to a ranch in Lander County where three lambs, valued at \$550, had been killed during the week. WS George Hansen utilized his decoy dogs to remove two coyotes in close proximity to the livestock damage site. No further livestock losses have been reported. The livestock producer was very pleased with WS George Hansen's protection effort.

New and Developing Methods

Nothing to Report.

Valuing and Investing in Employees

Nothing to Report

Information and Communication

On June 8th, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen attended the Nevada Board of Agriculture Meeting in Reno.

On June 14th, SD Jensen attended the N-1 Grazing Board Meeting in Elko.

Emerging Trends/Issues

In June, 2011, the Nevada Wildlife Services Program (NWSP) issued a final Environmental Assessment (EA) and Decision to implement a modification of its ongoing predator damage management program. The selected action will allow NWSP to increase its emphasis on protection of game species, including mule deer, bighorn sheep and sage grouse, while providing assistance to livestock producers. The changes were based on funding availability and requests for assistance. NWSP staff worked diligently with WS environmental staff on the effort to analyze the environmental effects of the program, and to respond to public comments on the EA. The EA was prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act which requires federal agencies to make informed decisions about programs that can affect the environment, before actions are taken.

Some of the environmental issues analyzed in the EA included program effects on target and non-target species, effects of aerial shooting operations, effects on recreation, humaneness and ethical perceptions, and program effectiveness. Several special interest groups provided a wide array of comments on the EA. After a thorough environmental analysis and consideration of all of the public comments, Jeff Green, WS Western Region Director issued a Finding of No Significant Impact and decision to implement the proposed action. The Decision and EA revealed that the program indeed benefits livestock producers, game species, Nevada's economy and other public interests, without significant harm to any environmental resource, including social and economic interests. The final EA, Decision and FONSI, and Responses to Public Comments can be found by visiting http://www.aphis.usda.gov/regulations/ws/ws_environmental_nevada.shtml

Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights (EEO/CR)

Nothing to Report.

Future Meetings and Events

July 11th, AAAE Conference in Reno, Nevada. SD Jensen to Attend.

July 26th and 27th, East District Meeting in Elko, Nevada. SD Jensen, East District Personnel and Staff Biologist Jack Sengl to attend.

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USDA-APHIS-WS
8775 Technology Way
Reno, NV 89521

