

August 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 August, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **3.7** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$43.6** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and **\$7.5** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **283** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$5,700** in damage and WS Specialists verified another **\$10,400** in damage to other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During August, coyotes accounted for **\$6,600** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **171** 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 August, **38** samples were processed.

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

Resource Protection

State Office

During August, 2011, the State Office trap loaning program checked out **46** cage traps. The species distribution for the traps loaned out were: raccoons (**13**), ground squirrels (**21**), striped skunks (**9**) and rabbits (**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

During the last few days of July and the first week of August, a sheep producer in northern White Pine County reported the loss of 10 lambs, valued at \$2,000, to predation. Crew Member (CM) Jerred Taylor responded to the remote location high in the Schell Creek Mountain Range. CM Jerred Taylor suspected that coyotes were responsible but requested the assistance of Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler to help confirm that it wasn't a lion depredation. During the first two days of August, MLS Buhler checked the area for lion activity. Although one ten day old lion track was found in the area, it was confirmed that coyotes were the culprits. CM Jerred Taylor placed several pieces of ground equipment in the area. No coyotes were removed during the first week. To make things more difficult, the band of sheep were moving through the rugged country and it appeared that the offending coyotes were moving with the sheep. This is somewhat common and makes protection of the sheep more difficult. On August 8th, CM Jerred Taylor and Wildlife Specialist (WS) Matt Spires located two coyotes near the band of sheep. Utilizing WS Spires' well trained coyote decoy dog, CM Jerred Taylor and WS Spires were able to call in and shoot the two adult coyotes. No further losses have been reported and CM Jerred Taylor continues to monitor the sheep. Technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations was provided to help reduce future losses. The sheep producer was very pleased with the assistance provided by Wildlife Services.



On July 28th, the Ely District office received a call concerning the loss of 20 lambs to coyote predation. WS Virgil Fullerton responded to the location and confirmed that coyotes had killed the lambs, a loss valued at \$4,000. WS Fullerton placed several traps and snares in the area near the kills. WS Fullerton also requested the assistance of the Ely airplane, crewed by Instructor Pilot (IP) Tim Keogh and CM Jerred Taylor. On August 1st, the Ely plane responded to the location. With the assistance of WS Fullerton as the ground crew, the plane was able to remove three coyotes near the sheep. The sheep producer was very pleased with the morning's results.



On August 1st, WS Scott Little received a report of two lambs, valued at \$400, lost to coyote predation. Since WS Little was already scheduled to work the area in Eureka County, he immediately responded to the call for assistance. WS Little confirmed that a coyote was responsible for the losses. WS Little used his horse and well trained coyote decoy dogs to start working the area near the kills. Later in the morning, WS Little located and dispatched one large male coyote, bringing the damage to an end. No further losses have been reported and WS Little will continue to monitor the sheep.



On August 2nd, the Ely plane, crewed by IP Keogh and CM Jerred Taylor, responded to a small ranch in eastern Nye County. The ranch owner had reported the loss of at least ten lambs, all of her chickens, one turkey and several other domestic poultry in her yard to predation. The total value of her losses was set at \$2,250. The ranch owner reported that on several

occasions she had observed a large coyote chasing her poultry in and around her yard. The resource owner reported that she had tried to shoot the offending coyote on several occasions but had missed it. The property owner reported that the coyote was always in her yard just at sunrise and left the property going to the north. With the assistance of District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett, acting as the ground crew, three coyotes were removed including one large male that was observed leaving the ranch yard. The aerial crew located the coyote in a brush patch adjacent to the ranch house and made at least two passes on the coyote before losing sight of it in the thick brush. DS Bennett was able to locate the coyote's track and trailed it to a nearby wood pile. DS Bennett attempted to find the coyote under the old building but could not see it. After communicating this to the plane, IP Keogh and CM Jerred Taylor landed near the location. With the use of a handy man jack, flashlight and a shotgun, the large adult coyote was removed. No further losses have occurred. Technical assistance was also provided. The ranch owner was so pleased; she phoned the Ely District Office and expressed her appreciation for the assistance from Wildlife Services. She said without the help she received she would not be able to stay in the sheep business.



On August 3rd, DS Bennett conducted a field inspection with WS Fullerton. Field inspections are very important to the Wildlife Services program. They are also a good way for supervisors to meet cooperators and discuss Wildlife Services' related issues.

On August 9th, WS Spires confirmed the loss of two lambs, valued at \$400, to coyote predation. The location of the damage was near Jackpot, Nevada. During the next two weeks, WS Spires removed eighteen coyotes utilizing traps and called in and shot two more, bringing the total number of coyotes removed to twenty. No further losses have been reported and the sheep producer was very pleased with the results.

On August 15th, CM Wayne Rowley responded to a call from a rancher in Elko County concerning the loss of one lamb, valued at \$200. Since the Elko plane was down for repairs, CM Rowley responded to the location and confirmed that coyotes had killed the lamb. Since this rancher has had a history of very bad losses, CM Rowley placed several pieces of equipment near the kills. On August 24th, CM Rowley removed two coyotes by trapping and on August 26th, removed another by calling. No further losses have been reported. The sheep producer was very pleased with the assistance he received.



On August 15th, a call was received concerning a coyote problem in Eureka County, between Eureka and Austin. As both Wildlife Services' field positions in Eureka and Austin had been previously lost to budget cuts, WS Little was asked to respond to the call. That same evening, WS Little traveled to the remote mountain range and camped. The following morning WS Little rode his horse into the band of sheep located high on the mountain and immediately spotted a pair of coyotes leaving the sheep, but unfortunately the coyotes had spotted WS Little first. WS Little then contacted the sheep herder and confirmed the loss of six lambs, valued at \$1,200, including one that the pair of coyotes had just killed and fed on. Knowing the saddle on top of the mountain that the coyotes had passed through, WS Little rode out and around to get in front of the departing coyotes, set his dogs up as decoys and promptly dispatched the coyote pair with two well placed shots. A necropsy of the old

coyote pair revealed that both had lamb in their stomachs. WS Little will continue to monitor this band of sheep for future problems.

During the past several weeks, WS Little confirmed the loss of four lambs, valued at \$800, to coyote predation. Despite WS Little's relentless efforts, this particular coyote continued to evade him. On August 5th, WS Little rode into the remote location in central White Pine County; located the elusive coyote with the aid of his decoy dogs; called in and removed the large male coyote, bringing the damage under control. Technical assistance was provided in the form of non-lethal recommendations.

On August 30th, DS Bennett conducted a day long field inspection with WS Little. The day was spent checking in with sheep herders in WS Little's assigned work area. During the day, WS Little's firearms and pesticides were also inspected to assure they were in compliance with Wildlife Services' policies.

During August, Wildlife Biologist (WB) Sam Sanders was checking on seven bands of sheep in Elko County. There were relatively few reports of coyotes preying on ewes or lambs in those bands. The non-lethal wildlife damage management the sheep producers are using and the abundance of other food sources such as rodents are most likely the reason for untypically low sheep losses to coyotes. However, on August 31st, a sheep herder reported that a ewe, valued at \$250, was killed by coyotes. WB Sanders checked his traps in the area and had two adult coyotes caught not far from the dead ewe. WB Sanders also placed several more traps in the area. No further losses have been reported.

WS Dayne Barnes is continuing to work on Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) Project 6a. The project area takes place in hunt unit 241 and is primarily designed to protect bighorn sheep. WS Barnes started working the project last November and recently removed the 100th coyote from the project area. Although designed to protect desert bighorn sheep, the project also protects mule deer, antelope and wild turkey that are found in hunt unit 241. Work is ongoing and communication continues with the local NDOW biologist for the region.



During the reporting period, WS Aaron Freund was busy protecting sheep in northern Elko County. WS Freund verified the loss of at least seven lambs and two adult ewes during August. The total value of the loss was placed at \$1,900. WS Freund utilized snares, traps and calls to remove twelve coyotes during the month. WS Freund also spent most of the month learning his new country. On several occasions, WS Freund hiked several miles to check with sheep herders in the remote roadless areas in the Jarbidge Wilderness.



During August, WS Derril Fry had no reported sheep losses for the month, although WS Fry did verify several hundred dollars in badger damage to a hayfield. Badgers often dig in the fields in search of food. These large holes often cause damage to farm machinery when they hit the sometimes hidden holes. WS Fry removed four badgers from the field, bringing the damage to an end. WS Fry also removed eighteen coyotes near several bands of sheep in southern Elko County.

West District

On August 4th, WS Eric Hansen checked equipment on a ranch where a lion had killed four sheep, valued at \$1,500, a couple weeks prior in Lyon County. WS Eric Hansen had placed trail snares

around the sheep kills in case the lion returned. Because lions cover a large geographic area it's not uncommon for them to return to the same spot and kill again within 2-4 weeks. On August 4th, an average sized lion attempted just that and was captured by WS Eric Hansen's trail snares. As often is the case on this property, the offending lion had jumped over the five foot electric fence, slithered past the guard dogs and sheep herders before being captured in the snare. This particular ranch has had a large increase in sheep being killed this past year. It appears there is a large increase in lions and black bears in Lyon County from tracks, sightings, confirmed sheep and deer losses observed by field personnel. WS Eric Hansen will continue to protect livestock on this ranch even though 30 years of history shows that every month predators will kill sheep on this property since the livestock are on the ranch year around. The livestock producer is not pleased with the increase in large predators killing livestock on the ranch, but very thankful for WS Eric Hansen stopping and or preventing livestock losses.



On August 9th, DS Jack Spencer Jr. and WB Luke Barto participated in an airport certification inspection to address problem wildlife on the airport. WB Barto presented a power point presentation to the local airport and Federal Aviation Administration Certification Inspector illustrating mitigation measures he performed the previous year that included: habitat modification, minimizing wildlife attractants, utilization of pyrotechnics, and exclusion to reduce occurrence of avian and mammalian species on and around the airport. WB Barto will continue to protect the airport from potential wildlife hazards.



On August 16th, DS Spencer attended the Nevada Joint Military Affairs Committee at a military base in Washoe County. Military commanders from Nevada meet with other government organizations to address any concerns that might arise including the threat of bird and mammal strikes on military airbases. DS Spencer recently received authority to station an airport biologist at the Naval Air Station (NAS) in Fallon. DS Spencer will continue to provide assistance to military personnel in Nevada.

During the week of August 8th thru August 12th, WS John Peter spent the week checking his M-44 line on muleback in Humboldt County. During the week, WS Peter removed three coyotes by utilizing M-44s. M-44s work surprisingly well even in 100 degree temperatures. WS Peter reported very few lamb losses on these two sheep bands this year and will continue to ride his mules in this remote area protecting livestock.

During the week of August 15th thru August 19th, WS Eric Hansen was busy trying to keep predatory wildlife away from a large ranch in Lyon County. The previous weeks, the ranch experienced the depredation of at least seven large lambs, valued at \$1,400, by predatory wildlife...in particular, a large lion. This large sheep ranch has thousands of sheep and has been acknowledged as having some of the finest wool in the world. This ranch has a long history of lion, coyote and black bear predation, as such, the ranch has practiced non-lethal approaches by placing 9,000 volt electric fences, bought and uses guard dogs, hired ranch hands, diligently picks up and burns all predated livestock to discourage predator feeding. Even with all these non-lethal approaches, lions, coyotes, and bears still risk shock from electric fences, swim rivers, and fend off guard dogs to kill sheep on private property. During the week WS Eric Hansen



trail snared one large lion, two black bears and five coyotes on the ranch itself...all within a one mile area. The livestock losses have ceased for the time being and WS Eric Hansen will continue to protect livestock on this ranch.

During the week of August 15th through August 19th, WS George Hansen was busy protecting sheep bands in Lander County. During the week, WS George Hansen removed a total of nine coyotes by utilizing leghold traps and trail snares despite summer temperatures resulting in tough trapping conditions. WS George Hansen will keep after it in Lander County.

During the week of August 16th through August 19th, DS Spencer conducted a field inspection with WS Ben Miller on the Washoe County Mule Deer Project (hunt unit 014). WS Miller had seen tracks where a large lion had moved toward the top of a 9,000 ft. peak in the protection area and knew that capturing this lion was going to be a challenge. DS Spencer and WS Miller backpacked in and stayed on the mountain in a tent, placing equipment on the top of the mountain to remove the offending lion. The duo found one recent deer kill and parts of a bighorn sheep but it was unknown if the lion killed the animals or if they died from other causes (e.g. starvation, lightning, fall, etc.). During the week it was determined that if the lion stayed in the area, then it would likely be captured rather soon. On August 18th, DS Spencer and WS Miller were cooking dinner at their spike camp when they observed 36 mule deer bucks in two basins below them. Many of the bucks were four point or better deer. DS Spencer will continue to conduct field inspections with employees and always tries to do field inspections when employees need help capturing an offending animal or when more equipment needs to be placed out.



On August 25th, WS Miller checked equipment in several locations on the Washoe County Mule Deer project (hunt unit 014). WS Miller checked several trail snare lines near mule deer and bighorn sheep and found a large male lion track headed along a rock out cropping. WS Miller checked his snares a short distance further and discovered that he had captured a large male lion (estimated in the 135-140 range) in a well placed trail snare. WS Miller will continue to protect mule deer and bighorn sheep in this area and takes great pride in protecting ungulate species.



On August 20th, a livestock producer from Lyon County reported that three sheep, valued at \$450, had been killed by a lion. The livestock producer didn't know who to call and after a couple of hours, two sportsman hound hunters showed up and tried to capture the offending lion but were unsuccessful after two days. The producer finally got a hold of WS Eric Hansen for help several days later and WS Eric Hansen inspected the area. WS Eric Hansen then informed the cooperater that if the offending lion comes back, to call him especially since the location was only 200 yards away from a school yard where little kids were playing. On Saturday August 27th, the livestock producer called and reported that the lion had returned and killed one sheep, valued at \$150. Even though it was the weekend, WS Eric Hansen inspected the sheep carcass and confirmed that a lion had killed the sheep. WS Eric Hansen then came back that evening and placed leghold traps very close to the

sheep carcass. WS policy does not allow trap placement closer than 30 feet near a carcass, unless the targeted species are lions or bears as the pan tension for a trap of that size is so high that scavenging birds such as ravens, vultures and eagles are not able to set the trap off. Additionally, WS Eric Hansen placed the traps out just before dark, so no non target birds would interfere with the sets. That night at 10:32 pm (less than two hours after placing the traps out) the ranch irrigator heard the lion in the trap. The captured lion was a 90 pound female, which was turned over to NDOW. WS Eric Hansen will continue to protect livestock and human health and safety in his work area.

On August 17th, a livestock producer from Humboldt County reported a lion in his sheep band. WS Peter inspected the situation and discovered some dead sheep that the summer sun had melted down in the past two days making necropsy challenging. WS Peter found where the lion was walking down a trail that lead to the sheep, so he placed trail snares accordingly. On August 18th, WS Peter checked his equipment and found that he had caught an 80 pound female lion in the trail snare. WS Peter will continue to protect livestock in this area. Each year lions kill livestock in this area and the local trend is that at least one more lion will move into these sheep within the next few weeks. WS Peter will continue to protect livestock.



On August 31st, a retired NDOW biologist called and reported that one sheep, valued at \$150, had been killed by a lion at a family member's suburban farm yard in Yerington. The gentleman reported that a week previous, another sheep was killed, but no one knew what to do about the situation. On the evening of August 31st, WS Eric Hansen placed leghold traps in the vicinity of the sheep carcass and about midnight the owner of the sheep could hear dogs barking, so she theorized that was when the lion had been captured. WS Eric Hansen showed up before daylight and discovered that he caught an offending 70 pound, two year old male lion. A necropsy was performed by DS Spencer at the state office. Both domestic sheep and mule deer wool and hair were found in the lion's stomach with wool still attached to the lion's claws. This lion was removed because it was killing livestock; however, it was also very close to the city limits and could easily have posed a threat to the public. Our hat's off to the knowledgeable retired biologist (who often sport traps) as he was right on the money with what the offending species was, as well as its sex and size. WS Eric Hansen will continue to protect livestock and human health and safety in Lyon County.



Throughout the month of August, WB Barto continued to protect aviation safety at a local airport, by monitoring for wildlife activity within the general zone. Continual monitoring of wildlife movements and detection of possible attractants on and around an airport is a crucial part in recognizing and mitigating threats to aviation safety. Seasonal changes, food availability and newly constructed structures are a few examples of ever-changing conditions that require continual vigilance.

New and Developing Methods

Nothing to Report.

Valuing and Investing in Employees

On August 8th, WS Miller, WB Barto, and WS Eric Hansen received recognition for “extra effort” that they provided while conducting wildlife damage management activities. WS’ employees are unlike any other federal employees, working late till midnight on an airport or leaving at 3:00am to get the job done is no big deal to dedicated employees. None of these employees receive overtime pay just the satisfaction of serving the public.

Information and Communication

On August 19th, 20th, and 21st, DS Bennett, WS Billy Taylor and WS Barnes attended the Nevada Trapper’s Association’s annual rendezvous held at the Beaver Dam State Park in Lincoln County. DS Bennett, WS Billy Taylor and WS Barnes provided both information and demonstrations to about 75 individuals attending the rendezvous. Fact sheets about the Wildlife Services program were distributed to the participants. Rulers, pencils and junior biologist stickers were also provided to the children that attended the meeting. The event was an excellent way for Wildlife Services to interact with members of the Nevada Trapper’s Association. Wildlife Services would like to thank the Nevada Trapper’s Association for the invitation and opportunity to attend the enjoyable and important event.



On August 12th, DS Bennett and WS Billy Taylor provided a field trip at the Ely office for the Ely Cub Scout Troop and their three Den Mothers. Wildlife conservation, wildlife damage management and good wildlife and land stewardship principles were discussed as part of a requirement for the Cub Scouts to earn their Wildlife Conservation Badges.



During the month of August, Wildlife Disease Biologist (WDB) Zack Bowers collected 17 intestinal samples from raccoons and skunks, which had been captured by the public, for the raccoon roundworm surveillance project that was discussed at the annual disease meeting in June. The purpose of the project is to gain information regarding the presence and prevalence of raccoon roundworm throughout the country. WDB Bowers has conducted limited surveillance in the past and has found raccoon roundworm to be fairly common in the Reno/Sparks area, and is therefore interested in the results of this sampling effort. WDB Bowers also collected blood from several of the animals at the request of NDOW.



On August 12th, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen attended the NDOW Commission Meeting in Fallon, NV.

On August 30th, SD Jensen attended the Nevada Board of Agriculture Meeting in Reno, NV.

Emerging Trends/Issues
Nothing to Report.

Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights (EEO/CR)
Nothing to Report.

Future Meetings and Events
September 23rd and 24th, NDOW Commission Meeting in Reno, NV. SD Jensen to attend.



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Wildlife Services



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