

January 2012

# 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 January, 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 **\$92.6** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$13.1** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **37** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$4,950** in damage and WS Specialists verified another **\$12,690** in damage to other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During January, coyotes accounted for **\$7,670** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **581** 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 January, **38** samples were processed.

*The following excerpts are a selection of activities and events of this program which occurred during the month of January, 2012.*

## Resource Protection

### State Office

During January, 2012, the State Office trap loaning program checked out **3** cage traps. The species distribution for the traps loaned out were: raccoons (**1**), and western wood rats (**2**). 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 January 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Elko plane, crewed by Pilot Ken Baer and Crew Member (CM) Wayne Rowley, flew in Lander County. With the assistance of Wildlife Specialist (WS) George Hansen as the ground crew, the aircrew was able to remove 25 coyotes. The coyotes were removed in areas that have experienced historically high predation losses to coyotes.

On January 4<sup>th</sup>, WS Scott Little confirmed the loss of one calf to coyote predation. The predation occurred in south western White Pine County, the value of the loss was \$500. WS Little was able to remove one adult coyote that was near the kill with his rifle and an additional coyote the following visit by utilizing traps. No further losses have been reported and WS Little provided technical assistance to help prevent future losses.



On January 4<sup>th</sup>, the Elko plane, crewed by Pilot Baer and CM Rowley, flew on a large sheep allotment in southern Elko County. The area flown has suffered very high lamb losses due to coyotes the past few springs. In an effort to reduce this occurrence, the plane removed eight coyotes during the morning's flight. WS Derril Fry assisted as the ground crew and used his well trained dogs to help recover two of the coyotes that had held up in thick brush.

On January 4<sup>th</sup>, the East District office received a call concerning the loss of two yearling ewe sheep to coyote predation. The value of the two replacement ewes was \$500. On January 6<sup>th</sup>, the Ely plane, crewed by Instructor Pilot (IP) Tim Keogh and CM Jerred Taylor, responded to the area in western White Pine County. With the assistance of District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett, the aircrew was able to remove two large male coyotes near the location of the kills. The sheep producer was in the area that morning and expressed his appreciation for the work provided by the Ely plane and Wildlife Services. Technical assistance was provided to help prevent future problems and no further losses have been reported on this band of sheep.



On January 8<sup>th</sup>, WS Aaron Freund received a report from a sheep herder south of Wendover, Nevada concerning the loss of two adult ewe sheep to coyote predation. WS Freund traveled to the remote location and confirmed that coyotes were responsible for the predation. The value of the two sheep was \$500. On January 11<sup>th</sup>, the Ely plane, crewed by IP Keogh and CM Jerred Taylor, responded to the location. With the assistance of WS Freund as the ground crew, three coyotes were removed. No further losses have been reported. The sheep producer was very pleased with the help received from both the Ely plane and WS Freund.

On January 8<sup>th</sup>, WS Virgil Fullerton received a call concerning the loss of seven adult ewe sheep to coyote predation. The value of the sheep was placed at \$1,750. On January 10<sup>th</sup> and January 26<sup>th</sup>, the Ely plane, crewed by IP Keogh and CM Jerred Taylor responded to the location in eastern White Pine County. During the two flights, the plane was able to

remove four coyotes, including two that were observed on a fresh sheep kill. WS Fullerton also placed more than 40 traps near the kill locations. During the preceding two weeks, WS Fullerton removed nine coyotes, bringing the damage to an end. The sheep producer was very pleased with the efforts provided by WS Fullerton and the Ely plane. No further losses have been reported and WS Fullerton continues to check the area for predation.

On January 9<sup>th</sup>, the Elko plane, crewed by Pilot Baer and CM Rowley, flew on several cattle ranches in central Elko County. With high historic losses and calving season in a few weeks, the plane removed 32 coyotes, during the morning's flight. WS Freund acted as the ground crew and helped locate several coyotes for the plane. The cattle ranchers in the area were very pleased with the assistance provided by the Elko plane and Wildlife Services.



On January 10<sup>th</sup>, WS Freund confirmed the loss of one adult ewe sheep to coyote predation. The value of the ewe was \$250. On January 11<sup>th</sup>, at the request of WS Freund, the Ely plane, crewed by IP Keogh and CM Jerred Taylor, responded to the location in eastern Elko County. With the assistance of WS Freund as the ground crew, three coyotes were removed including two that were just leaving the kill site. No further losses have been reported. WS Freund has been working in the East District for almost a year and has done an excellent job. He is currently protecting more than 15,000 sheep near Wendover, Nevada. WS Freund's cooperators and supervisor are very pleased with his commitment to protecting livestock in his work area.

On January 11<sup>th</sup>, Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler and MLS Casey Shields removed an adult female lion from Mt. Moriah. Both employees have been working in hunt units 114 and 115 for the protection of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. The female lion's track was found in very close proximity to more than 20 Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep and was successfully treed a short distance away. Work has been closely coordinated with the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) Biologist for this area. The lion was skinned and turned into the Ely NDOW office.



On January 11<sup>th</sup>, WS Billy Taylor confirmed the loss of two adult ewe sheep to coyote predation. The value of the two ewes was \$500. WS Billy Taylor used traps to remove one large adult male coyote near the kill site. A few days later, the Ely plane, crewed by IP Keogh and CM Jerred Taylor, responded to the location in northern Lincoln County and removed four more coyotes. No further losses have been reported and technical assistance was provided to help prevent future predation from occurring.

On January 24<sup>th</sup>, MLS Buhler received a call concerning the loss of three adult sheep to mountain lion predation. The value of the three sheep was \$750. On the morning of January 25<sup>th</sup>, MLS Buhler left his duty station at 3:00 AM and traveled to the remote location in central Nye County. MLS Buhler was able to confirm that a lion was responsible for the predation. Shortly after daylight, MLS Buhler placed six tracking hounds on the trail of the lion where it left the kill sites. Despite very difficult tracking conditions, MLS followed the li-



ons track for many miles on his mule. Shortly before dark that night, MLS Buhler's dogs were able to tree the adult male lion. With one well placed shot, MLS Buhler was able to dispatch the 150 pound male lion. MLS Buhler then skinned the lion and began the long journey back to his vehicle, arriving back at the vehicle 22 hours after he had left his duty station early that morning. It is not uncommon for Nevada Wildlife Service's employees to put in very long days and weeks in an effort to get the job done and assist Nevada livestock owners and citizens.

On January 25<sup>th</sup>, MLS Shields used his mule and six well trained tracking hounds to successfully remove a six year old male lion near Mt. Moriah in eastern Nevada. The lion was in excellent condition and had just killed a mule deer prior to its capture. MLS Shields is currently working on an NDOW project to protect Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep in hunt units 114 and 115. The lion was skinned and turned into the Ely NDOW office the same day. This is the second lion removed during the past two weeks in the project area. Projects such as this are made possible by the \$3 predator fee on all big game applications. Direct communications with NDOW biologists help ensure the project is successful.



On January 25<sup>th</sup>, DS Bennett completed a day long field inspection with MLS Casey Shields. The field inspection took place near Mt. Moriah and DS Bennett was able to see MLS Shield's well trained hounds in action as they pursued and treed a 140 pound male lion on an NDOW project to protect Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep.

On January 25<sup>th</sup>, WS Fullerton received a call from a cattle rancher in northern White Pine County concerning a problem with ravens. The rancher reported that ravens had attacked and killed a newborn calf valued at \$500. The rancher reported seeing more than 50 ravens in the area. On January 30<sup>th</sup>, WS Fullerton traveled to the location and placed out eggs treated with DRC-1339. The rancher reported that the raven numbers were reduced and that no further predations have occurred. With raven populations increasing throughout Nevada, more and more calls are being received concerning raven predation on livestock.



On January 26<sup>th</sup>, WS Matt Spires received a report that ravens had killed a sheep in north eastern White Pine County. WS Spires traveled to the location and saw about 170 ravens near the kill site. On January 27<sup>th</sup>, WS Spires placed out eggs treated with DRC-1339 to remove some of the ravens. WS Spires saw a reduction in raven numbers following the treatment and no further losses have been reported. Ravens are often attracted in high numbers to areas where livestock are having their young. Ravens in very high concentrations can and have caused a great deal of damage to young livestock both by predation as well as harassing the mothers while they are birthing.

During January, work began on NDOW project 22. NDOW project 22 is an ongoing project to protect mule deer from coyote predation. In eastern Nevada, NDOW hunt units 222, 231 and hunt area 24 have been identified by NDOW biologist as areas targeted for coyote removal. Coyote removal projects are conducted on both wintering grounds as well as mule deer fawning areas. During four flights, the Ely plane, crewed by IP Keogh and CM Jerred Taylor, a total of 13 coyotes were removed on this project during January.

During January, WS Fry was busy removing coyotes in his area in southern Elko County. WS Fry removed six coyotes using ground equipment in areas that have had very high predation issues in the past. The sheep in WS Fry's work area will be lambing in a few short months. Removing coyotes in areas with high historic losses prior to lambing can be very beneficial in preventing high losses to coyotes. Trapping before the sheep arrive is much easier since the sheep and guard dogs are not affecting the ground equipment.

### West District

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, a sheep producer from Pershing County reported that eight ewes (loss valued at \$2,000) had been killed by coyotes. On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, Pilot Wes Gossard and CM Brandon VanderMay conducted aerial activities around the winter sheep bands. Right at first light, the aerial crew removed a pair of coyotes feeding on a freshly killed ewe (loss valued at \$250) that was located between the herder's camp and the sheep band. The aerial crew removed a total of four coyotes within close proximity of the sheep bands. WS Doug Koepke provided ground support during aerial operations. To date, no further livestock losses have been reported.



On January 4<sup>th</sup>, DS Jack Spencer conducted a mid-winter waterfowl survey with NDOW Biologists in the Reno-Sparks area. DS Spencer and the other biologists observed over 12,000 migratory waterfowl species in the area. DS Spencer has participated in this joint waterfowl survey for the past 14 years.



On January 4<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted routine aerial activities in Humboldt County around several cattle producers. During the early morning operation, a total of 22 coyotes were removed around the calving areas. WS John Peter provided ground support during the operation.

On January 5<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around a large sheep producer in Lyon County. The Lyon County trapper position has been vacant for some time, so DS Spencer has been conducting protection efforts until the position is filled. During the early morning flight, a total of 11 coyotes were removed around the sheep. DS Spencer located seven of the coyotes for the aerial crew by voice howling. This was one of the highest numbers of coyotes removed in the past decade around this particular sheep producer. The sheep rancher was very pleased with the assistance from the aircrew. Protection efforts will be ongoing.



On January 6<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around two sheep bands in Humboldt County. During the flight, a total of 13 coyotes were removed. WS Peter provided ground support. Protection efforts are ongoing.

On January 11<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around several sheep bands in Washoe and Pershing Counties, which resulted in the removal of six

coyotes. WS Peter provided valuable ground support.

On January 11<sup>th</sup>, a livestock producer from Humboldt County reported that ravens had pecked the eye out of one calf (valued at \$500) and injured one other. WS Koepke advised the cattle producer to pre-bait the offending ravens with hard boiled chicken eggs. The untreated eggs help ravens with bait acceptance and acts as a lure crop away from the newborn calves. On January 13<sup>th</sup>, WS Koepke placed out treated DRC-1339 egg baits, resulting in the removal of 15 offending ravens from the calving areas. To date, no further livestock losses have been reported and the livestock producer was very pleased with WS Koepke's protection efforts.



On January 19<sup>th</sup>, WS Peter and WS Gregg Jones (Oregon) worked together to help several cattle producers on the Nevada/Oregon border who were experiencing livestock losses caused by coyotes and feral dogs. WS Peter and WS Jones placed a pre-bait station to lure coyotes and feral dogs away from the calving areas. Adjacent to the pre-bait station, WS Peter placed out M-44 units. After two checks, WS Peter removed one feral dog and 13 coyotes. This area experienced serious livestock losses a few years ago; however, it is much more manageable today with protection efforts. The Humboldt County Sheriff's department often requests assistance from Wildlife Services with feral dog issues when they arise.



On January 20<sup>th</sup>, DS Spencer checked equipment on a large sheep ranch in Lyon County. DS Spencer was checking equipment on the other side of the East Walker River when he discovered a young ram sheep (valued at \$784) buried alongside the road. DS Spencer inspected the dead ram and found two others dead and two more crippled that later died (loss valued at \$3,136) due to a female lion. DS Spencer released his hounds from the kills, which trailed the female lion from the kill site down along the river. The female lion crossed the East Walker River around a dozen times and would not tree. There had been a repeat offending female lion that would kill sheep on this ranch over the past years and then elude capture. Finally after a three hour chase, the hounds caught the estimated 75 pound 13-15 year old female on the ground, which was dispatched. The female lion had only two really worn top canine teeth and literally no bottom canines. DS Spencer also removed five coyotes by utilizing trail snares around the lambing area on the south end of the ranch. The rancher was very pleased with DS Spencer's efficiency and livestock protection efforts.



On January 24<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM Vandermay conducted an aerial operation around several sheep bands in Pershing County. During the early morning hours, the aerial crew removed eight coyotes. The aerial crew also saw two coyotes breeding at a dead sheep carcass (loss valued at \$250) which were promptly removed. WS Koepke provided ground support for the aerial crew during the flight. Protection efforts will be ongoing for these sheep bands.

On January 24<sup>th</sup>, a sheep producer from Washoe County reported that six lambs (valued at \$1,500) had been killed by ravens. On January 26<sup>th</sup>, WS Koepke placed DRC-1339 treated egg baits which resulted in the removal of 20 ravens from the lambing area. No further livestock losses have been reported since the removal of the ravens.

During the week of January 23<sup>rd</sup> thru January 27<sup>th</sup>, residents from Carson City County reported that coyotes had killed three pet dogs (loss valued at \$2,000). Technical assistance was provided to the pet owners to reduce a reoccurrence.

On January 27<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation along the Nevada/California/Oregon tri-State border. A cattle producer reported that coyotes were moving in around his calving area. During the flight, a total of seven coyotes were removed. WS Koepke, CA-WS George Affonso and CA-WS Mullins provided ground support during the operation.

On January 30<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several cattle producers calving grounds in Humboldt County, which resulted in the removal of 28 coyotes. WS Peter located many of the coyotes for the aerial crew. The cattle producers were very pleased with the protection efforts.

During the month of January, WS Koepke was busy running M-44s, snares, and leg-hold traps in several counties in northern Nevada to protect livestock. His effort resulted in the removal of 51 coyotes. WS Koepke takes his work seriously and continually works to improve his abilities.



During the month of January, WS Ben Miller was busy protecting mule deer from coyotes on the Washoe County Mule Deer Project. Specifically, WS Miller utilized snares, leghold traps and calling to remove 16 coyotes. Of interest, WS Miller observed 46 mule deer bucks while checking equipment in a canyon.



During the month of January, Wildlife Biologist (WB) Zack Bowers continued conducting a Wildlife Hazard Assessment (WHA) at a military installation in Northern NV. The WHA involves conducting structured surveys on the airfield and the surrounding area, as well as general observations. This data is collected for a 12 month period in order to determine seasonal and spatial trends of wildlife usage on the airfield and surrounding area. Once this is complete, recommendations can be made regarding species management, habitat alterations, and agricultural management practices. While conducting the assessment, WB Bowers also participates in harassment and removal of wildlife when necessary to minimize direct threats to aviation safety. During the reporting period, WB Bowers chased a coyote and a feral dog off the airfield. WB Bowers also chased horned larks off the runways on a regular basis which has been identified by the Smithsonian via feather or snardge DNA as the cause of the last six strikes.

On January 30<sup>th</sup>, WB Bowers picked up feather remains from a strike that occurred on Jan 27<sup>th</sup>. The strike was ingested into the engine and caused significant damage, requiring an engine swap. This will likely be a very costly strike, fortunately no injuries occurred. WB Bowers suspects that the feathers belong to a horned lark, but sent off the remains for positive identification to the Smithsonian. The Airfield Manager and WB Bowers will continue to harass horned larks off the airfield.

Throughout the month of January, WB Luke Barto continued to protect aviation safety at a local air-

port, removing: one adult coyote and six rock doves (feral pigeons). Coyotes are a direct threat to arriving and departing aircraft when crossing runways and taxiways, as well as indirectly attracting other scavenger birds and birds of prey to available food sources. In addition to removal of hazardous wildlife to aircraft, non-lethal harassment techniques are utilized to dissuade threats to aviation safety. WB Barto used pyrotechnics to disperse 348 Canada geese and 250 American crows away from the above mentioned airport.



WB Barto also removed approximately 12,000 non-native European starlings from a dairy and a feedlot in Lyon County. This large number of starlings consume and contaminate hundreds of pounds of livestock feed a day as well as the possibility of a human health and safety concern. The starlings were removed using DRC-1339.

WB Barto continued wildlife surveys for the Army Corps funded project during the reporting period.

### **New and Developing Methods**

Nothing to Report.

### **Valuing and Investing in Employees**

Nothing to Report.

### **Information and Communication**

On January 18<sup>th</sup>, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen attended the Sage Grouse Coordination Meeting in Carson City.

### **Emerging Trends/Issues**

Nothing to Report.

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

Nothing to Report.

### **Future Meetings and Events**

February 10<sup>th</sup>, N-4 Grazing Board Meeting in Ely. SD Jensen and DS Bennett to attend.



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# Wildlife Services



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