

March 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

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 March, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **8.9** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$110** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$43** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **1,154** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$4,850** in damage and WS Specialists verified another **\$17,400** in damage to other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During March, coyotes accounted for **\$10,200** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **643** coyotes were taken with a variety of management methods to resolve these and other ongoing complaints. WS routinely collects blood samples or oral swabs from species taken or handled during normal control activities for monitoring the presence of plague, avian influenza, and other diseases. In March, **72** samples were processed.

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

Resource Protection

State Office

During March, 2012, the State Office trap loaning program checked out **17** cage traps. The species distribution for the traps loaned out were: raccoons (**2**), ground squirrels (**9**), mink (**2**), and western wood rats (**4**). Information regarding baits to use, trap placement tactics, handling of trapped animals and safety precautions to take when working with the wildlife species were provided for all equipment loaned.

East District

On March 1st, the East District office received a call concerning a problem with a mountain lion near Baker, Nevada. The reporting party stated that a lion had killed a domestic ram at a facility that housed teenage girls. The facility is a ranch environment for young women that have been in trouble for various offenses of the law. The ranch setting was designed to help rehabilitate and hopefully prevent them from committing more serious offenses in the future. The faculty at the ranch was very concerned for their safety, as the domestic sheep was killed near their dormitory. The reporting party stated that on several occasions, some of the young women would attempt to leave the facility and on the night the ram was killed, one of the girls had ran away and spent the night in the area that the lion attacked the sheep. Her tracks were found near the site the lion had attacked and killed the ram. On March 2nd, District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett and Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler traveled to the location and confirmed that a lion had walked near all the occupied buildings and had killed a domestic ram valued at \$500. MLS Buhler placed six well trained hounds on the track and treed a 10 year male lion a short distance away, which was then dispatched. At the request of the faculty administrator, DS Bennett and MLS Buhler provided an instructional session to the staff and all the occupants at the ranch. The importance of safety was stressed in an attempt to keep any others from straying away from the facility. No further problems have been reported and the faculty was very pleased with the prompt response by Wildlife Services. The lion was an adult male in excellent condition weighing about 160 pounds. The lion was skinned and tuned into the Ely Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) office the following day.



On March 2nd, DS Bennett conducted a day long field inspection with MLS Buhler. Field inspections are designed to allow supervisors the chance to inspect equipment and vehicles to assure everything is safe and in compliance with Wildlife Service's policies and directives. Fire-arms are also inspected during these inspections.

On March 3rd, coyote damage management under a NDOW Heritage project was conducted in NDOW hunt unit 144 to protect mule deer. After consultation with the NDOW wildlife biologist for area 14, work began. A contract helicopter with a Wildlife Service's gunner was used. During four mornings of flying, a total of 85 coyotes were removed. Most of the coyotes removed were pairs and in very close proximity to mule deer. WS Derril Fry and WS Billy Taylor acted as the ground crew during the operation. Howling was utilized in an attempt to target dominant coyote pairs near the mule deer. Both employees would howl and then wait for coyotes to howl back. Once a response was heard, the helicopter was then directed to their location. This technique has worked very well in the past and was very effective during this operation as well. Draw stations were also placed out several days in advance and were also very beneficial during the mission.



On March 5th, the Elko plane responded to a call concerning the loss of three calves to coyote predation. The damage occurred on a ranch in northern Elko County. With the assistance of WS Aaron Freund as the ground crew, the plane was able to locate and remove 16 coyotes. All the coyotes removed were in the same pastures as the cows and calves. The Elko plane went back a few days later and removed an additional seven coyotes, bringing the damage to an end. The rancher contacted the East District Supervisor and expressed his appreciation for all the help provided by the Elko plane and Wildlife Services. The rancher reported that before getting help from the Elko plane, he had lost as many as 23 calves to coyote predation in the same location. Technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations was provided in an effort to help minimize future losses.



On March 6th, MLS Casey Shields removed a female lion in NDOW hunt unit 115. The NDOW project is designed to protect Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep that summer in the Great Basin National Park and winter just outside the park on the south end of the Snake Range. The lion removed was in close proximity to several bighorn sheep. A depredated adult bighorn ewe and a four year old ram were discovered by MLS Shields. Both bighorn sheep were confirmed as lion kills and the lion removed was believed to be responsible for both kills. The lion was about nine years old and weighed approximately 90 pounds. The lion was skinned and turned into the Ely NDOW office the next day.



On March 7th, WS Matt Spires confirmed the loss of one ewe sheep, valued at \$250, to raven predation. The ewe was an older sheep that was penned near the rancher's house. Several ravens began pecking at the sheep resulting in its death. On March 12th, WS Spires treated the area with hard boiled chicken eggs treated with DRC-1339. Several ravens were removed and no further losses have been reported. Although the ewe was penned and being monitored, additional technical assistance was also provided in an effort to help minimize future losses.



On March 8th, the Elko plane responded to a call in western Elko County concerning the loss of three calves, valued at \$1,500, to coyote predation. With the assistance of WS Fry and his well trained coyote decoy dogs, the plane was able to remove 18 coyotes during the morning's flight. The rancher was very pleased with the results. No further losses have been reported.

On March 8th, Wildlife Services flew in NDOW hunt units 222 and 231 for mule deer protection. After consulting with the NDOW biologist for both units, work started. In three mornings of flying with the helicopter, 39 coyotes were removed. WS Billy Taylor and WS Dayne Barnes acted as the ground crew during the operation. After three years of work in the area, coyote numbers appear to be down hopefully helping the mule deer herds in the area.

On March 14th, WS Spires received a report concerning the loss of one calf, valued at \$500. WS Spires requested the assistance of the Ely plane. On March 15th, the Ely plane responded to the location. With WS Spires as the ground crew, the plane was able to remove three coyotes. No further losses have been reported.

On March 12th, WS Virgil Fullerton received a report concerning a problem with ravens. The cattle rancher reported that several ravens had attacked and injured two of his newborn calves. The dollar

loss of the injuries was placed at \$300. On March 14th, WS Fullerton responded to the location and treated the ranch with eggs containing DRC-1339. A post inspection visit revealed that about 40 ravens were removed. No further losses have been reported. WS Fullerton provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future problems from occurring. The cattle rancher was very pleased with the assistance provided by Wildlife Services and reported that raven numbers in and around his ranch have increased substantially during the past few years.

On March 12th, the East District office received three different calls concerning problems with ravens. Three different cattle ranches in Nye County reported the loss of three calves to raven predation. The value of the three calves was placed at \$1,500. On March 13th, DS Bennett and WS Hunter Bodenchuk traveled to the remote ranches and confirmed the damage. Eggs treated with DRC-1339 were placed out on the three ranches. No further losses have been reported. DS Bennett also took the opportunity to provide training to WS Bodenchuk concerning the proper way to prepare and apply DRC-1339. DS Bennett provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future problems with ravens.



On March 12th, the East District office received a call concerning the loss of two calves, valued at \$1,000, to coyote predation. On March 14th, the Ely plane responded to the location in Nye County. With the assistance of DS Bennett, one large adult male coyote was removed near the calf kills. The rancher reported that he had shot another coyote the day before, bringing the damage to an end.

On March 12th, a call was received in the East District concerning a raven problem in Eureka County. A large cattle rancher reported several hundred ravens were hanging around his calving pastures and at least one young calf had been attacked and killed by the ravens. On March 13th, WS Scott Little traveled to the location and placed eggs treated with DRC-1339. The rancher reported that the raven problem was solved and expressed his appreciation for the prompt service provided by WS Little. WS Little provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.

On March 13th, a call was received in the East District concerning a raven problem in Lander County. A large cattle rancher reported that ravens had killed two calves valued at \$1,000. The ravens had pecked out the eyes on both calves shortly after they were born. WS Scott Little traveled to the ranch and placed out eggs treated with DRC-1339. Several ravens were removed, bringing an end to the damage. WS Little provided non-lethal technical assistance to help prevent raven problems in the future.

On March 19th, MLS Buhler was contacted by WS Fullerton, concerning the loss of ten adult domestic ewe sheep to a lion. The total loss of the sheep was placed at \$2,000. On March 20th, MLS Buhler and WS Fullerton responded to the location. MLS Buhler placed six tracking and trailing hounds on the lions trail. The lion was trailed several miles from the kills and was treed and dispatched near the NDOW Mount Moriah Bighorn sheep protection project. This is a great example of how both NDOW projects and livestock protection efforts benefit each other. The lion removed was a two year old female that weighed about 75 pounds. The lion was skinned and turned into the Ely NDOW office the following day. Technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations was provided to the sheep producer in an effort to prevent future problems.

On March 22nd, MLS Shields trailed and removed an adult female lion on the south end of the Snake

Range. This NDOW project is designed to protect Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep that summer in the Great Basin National Park and winter just outside the park on the south end of the Snake Range. The lion was removed about two miles south of several bighorn sheep that spend the winter and spring months just outside the park. The lion was a two year old that weighed about 75 pounds. The lion was skinned and turned into the Ely NDOW office the following day.

On March 27th, the East District office received a call concerning the loss of two calves, valued at \$1,000, to coyote predation. On March 29th, the Ely plane responded to the cattle ranch in Nye County. With the assistance of DS Bennett as the ground crew, six coyotes were removed. All six coyotes were paired and in very close proximity to the kill locations. No further losses have been reported and technical assistance was provided to the rancher. The rancher contacted DS Bennett and expressed his appreciation for the help provided by the Ely plane and Wildlife Services.

During March, the Elko office received four different calls concerning problems with ravens. Four ranchers reported the loss of four newborn calves to raven predation. The value of the calves was set at \$2,000. Both pilot Ken Baer and Crew Member (CM) Wayne Rowley provided assistance to the cattle ranchers. Eggs treated with DRC-1339 were placed near the kills on all the ranches. Several ravens were removed and no further losses have been reported. Non-lethal technical assistance was also provided in an effort to help prevent future losses.

WS Barnes spent the month of March removing predators in NDOW hunt unit 241 in the Delamar Range. WS Barnes removed several coyotes and continues to run equipment for mountain lions in the remote mountain range in Lincoln County and was rewarded with a workable lion track on the south side of the Delamars. He released the hounds, trailing the estimated 160 pound tom roughly 10 miles over the course of two days and on March 28th, was again rewarded to find the tom in one of the neck snares that he had set. This lion had tested WS Barnes patience to the end as he had been after it for two years, capturing it once before in a neck snare, but losing it because the breakaway device had failed (breakaway devices are used to release unharmed non-target animals if they get caught in a snare), so the lion had run free. WS Barnes will continue to use his mules and hounds to check water holes and his surveillance equipment and three mountain lion call boxes for possible lion and coyote activity.



West District

During March, the West District was plagued with calls from cattle producers requesting protection efforts, especially in Lander and Humboldt Counties. DS Jack Spencer has been the supervisor in the West District for the past 12 years and can't remember a time with so many requests for assistance from cattle producers. The aerial crew has been flying multiple calving areas on all aerial operations.

During the month of March, WS John Peter finished up the feral dog project in Humboldt County. The Humboldt County Sherriff's office requested assistance with feral dogs which resulted in WS Peter removing three feral dogs from around a cattle ranch. This is the third year in a row where the Humboldt County Sheriff's office has requested assistance, removing stock killing dogs. WS Peter will continue to assist livestock producers and work closely with the Sheriff's department.

During the first few days of March, several cattle producers in Humboldt County requested aerial as-

sistance around their calving areas after dealing with coyote predation and attacks on vulnerable young calves. On March 3rd, Pilot Wes Gossard and CM Brandon VanderMay conducted aerial operations around several calving areas in Humboldt County. During the flight, a total of 28 coyotes were removed in the immediate area of the calves. DS Spencer provided ground support for the air crew.

During the month of March, WS George Hansen was busy checking ground equipment in Lander County for sheep and cattle protection. Livestock losses have been minimal this past winter in the area; however, with WS Hansen continually trapping around livestock it's no surprise there are minimal losses. WS Hansen has been removing six to seven coyotes per week by utilizing leghold traps, trail snares and calling and shooting. WS Hansen will continue to protect livestock in his work area.

On March 5th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted aerial operations around several cattle producers in Humboldt County. During the flight, a total of 30 coyotes were removed around the calving areas. During the birthing season, coyotes move in around the cattle. WS Peter located several of the coyotes for the air crew. Protection efforts are ongoing.



On March 6th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay were flying around calving areas in Humboldt County when they spotted several coyotes eating the hind end of a cow in the middle of the birthing process. The aerial crew immediately dispatched the offending coyotes then guided the ground crew to the location of the cow. The rancher inspected the situation and confirmed that the calf (valued at \$800) died from the coyotes' attack. The cow had some damage but the rancher thought the cow may live.

On March 6th, DS Spencer inspected equipment on a sheep ranch in Lyon County that lost three lambs to coyotes a few days prior. DS Spencer called around the ranch early in the morning and successfully voice howled in a pair of coyotes and dispatched both with the aid of his decoy dog. DS Spencer also removed three additional coyotes by utilizing leghold traps. No further livestock losses have been reported, since the removal of the coyotes.

During the week of March 12th thru March 16th, WS Hansen was busy running equipment around several lambing areas in Lander County. During the week, WS Hansen removed 11 coyotes including seven in one day by utilizing trail snares and leghold traps. WS Hansen will continue to protect livestock in his work area.

On March 22nd, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay flew around a calving area in Lander County that had experienced coyote problems. During the flight, the aerial crew found a group of five coyote's right in the middle of the calving area. WS Hansen provided ground support during the aerial operations.

On March 23rd, WS Peter and WS Ben Miller inspected equipment at a Bighorn sheep translocation project in northern Washoe County (hunt unit 011). The duo had placed out a call box and several trail snares near the sheep where a male and female lion were living before the bighorn sheep release. Upon inspection, a large male lion was removed within 10 feet of the call box. The male lion measured seven feet, seven inches in length and was estimated to weigh over 135 pounds. Mountain lions have been documented to consume relocated bighorn sheep in some areas. WS Miller

will continue to protect these bighorn sheep, as there is still a female lion living in the immediate area.

During the last two weeks in March, WS Doug Koepke was busy placing equipment around sheep bands/lambing areas in Pershing and Washoe Counties. WS Koepke removed a total of 22 coyotes and three dens. WS Koepke will continue to protect these sheep bands until they move back into California.



During the week of March 25th thru March 30th, DS Spencer, WS Miller and WS Spires began helicopter work on the Washoe County Mule Deer project in hunt unit 014. WS Miller has been very effective at targeting coyotes and lions in this protection area, which is a little smaller in size than the State of Rhode Island, but aerial work helps out a lot. NDOW requested WS to use the Hunter's Alert Heritage Project to protect mule deer for a week's worth of helicopter flying in the protection area. DS Spencer and WS Miller conducted all the ground crew efforts by voice howling and in some instances calling coyotes out of the thick terrain with call boxes then visually spotting them before calling in the aerial crew. One morning the aerial crew found three coyotes attacking a young foal and although the coyotes were removed, the young foal was unable to stand from the coyote's attack. WS Spires did an excellent job as a helicopter gunner as most coyotes were removed with one shot. The aerial crew removed a total of 55 coyotes, during the week. WS Miller will continue to protect this herd of mule deer.

On Saturday March 31st, WS Peter, DS Spencer, WS Miller, Wildlife Biologist (WB) Zack Bowers, WB Luke Barto and CM Spires conducted an early morning feral hog project in Humboldt County. Each year a feral pig project is conducted in Humboldt County to reduce crop damage and monitor for various swine diseases. During the morning operation, the helicopter crew removed two boar feral pigs. Because of these ongoing removal efforts, feral pigs have not expanded into other areas of Nevada. Our "thanks" go out to WS Spires for providing valuable aerial gunner service during the week.



On March 26th, WS Peter inspected nearly 200 pieces of ground equipment he had placed around numerous calving areas in Humboldt County. During the long day, WS Peter removed 20 coyotes by utilizing M-44's and one coyote by trail snare. WS Peter has provided excellent protection efforts for the past 27 years for his many livestock co-operators in Humboldt County. WS Peter will relentlessly continue to protect livestock.



During the month of March, WB 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 which are based on threats discovered during the WHA. While conducting the assessment WB Bowers also conducts direct control of wildlife when necessary to minimize direct threats to aviation safety. During the reporting period, WB Bowers observed badgers on and around the runways during surveys. As a result, two badgers were removed from the area to reduce the threat of a badger versus aircraft incident.

Throughout the month of March, WB Barto continued to protect aviation safety at a local airport, re-

moving: three pigeons, three skunks and two raccoons. Lethal removal is part of an integrated approach to wildlife damage management and reinforces harassment techniques if/when wildlife becomes unresponsive. WB Barto used pyrotechnics to disperse 11 Canada geese, seven California gulls and three red tailed hawks away from the above mentioned airport.

WB Barto also removed approximately 1,000 non-native European starlings from a feedlot in Lyon County. This large number of starlings consumed and contaminated hundreds of pounds of live-stock feed a day as well as imposing the potential of a human health and safety concern. The starlings were removed using DRC-1339.

WB Barto also removed a red tail hawk nest from a commercial building in Sparks, NV. Man-made structures, such as buildings, are sometimes utilized for nesting by birds of prey (raptors). When raptors nest on structures such as buildings, they can become very protective, often aggressively diving at customers and employees in an attempt to drive them away from the nest. They can pose a threat to human health and safety in addition to causing a financial toll on local business. Removal of the nest was very much appreciated.

WB Barto also made a site visit to a sage-grouse lek in Lyon County as part of a Heritage project. The purpose of the site visit was to locate the lek site and to assess the landscape and predator abundance in the area prior to implementing raven removal, if warranted.

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

New and Developing Methods

Nothing to Report.

Valuing and Investing in Employees

On March 27th, WS Bodenchuk traveled to Las Vegas and successfully passed the Nevada pesticide applicator tests for using restricted-use pesticides.

During March, WS Miller was awarded a certificate and lapel pin, commemorating his ten years of federal service. Congratulations Ben!



Also During March, Budget Technician (BT) Cassie Parks accepted a position outside of Wildlife Services. BT Parks will be sorely missed as she was truly gifted in her work, and always a pleasure to work with. In appreciation of BT Park's service, she was awarded a "stepping out" plaque. We wish Cassie the best in her new career.



Information and Communication

On March 3rd, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen and DS Bennett provided a presentation at a meeting organized by a former Nevada State Assemblyman in Elko, Nevada. The meeting was set up to provide information concerning the possible listing of the sage-grouse as a threatened or endangered species. The speakers at the meeting included: three Nevada State Assemblymen, a representative from the Governor's office, as well as several individuals from different agencies involved with sage-grouse issues. SD Jensen provided an overview of the Wildlife Services' program and DS Bennett provided a power point presentation concerning sage-grouse protection efforts in Nevada.

More than 200 people attended the four hour meeting.

On March 12th, Hunter Bodenchuk began working in the East District. Hunter was selected to fill a seasonal position to help protect sage-grouse in the East District. Hunter is from Texas and has worked for Wildlife Services in the past for the Arizona program. We would all like to welcome Hunter to the Nevada Wildlife Services' program.



On March 26th, Nathan Fowler started working for the East District. Nathan was selected to fill a vacant wildlife specialist position in Elko County. During Nathan's first week, he rode with both WS Little and WS Fullerton to help him see some of the work performed in Nevada. Nathan has worked for Wildlife Services in the past and was most recently working on a large military facility in southern California, protecting endangered species from predation. We would all like to welcome Nathan to the Nevada Wildlife Services' program.



Emerging Trends/Issues

Nothing to Report.

Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights (EEO/CR)

Nothing to Report.

Future Meetings and Events

April 26th, N-3 Grazing Board Meeting in Yerington. SD Jensen and DS Spencer to attend.



USDA APHIS

Wildlife Services



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

