

May 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 May, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **5.1** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$51** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$48** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **201** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$6,250** in damage and WS Specialists verified another **\$3,600** in damage to other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During May, coyotes accounted for **\$13,600** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **286** coyotes were taken with a variety of management methods to resolve these and other ongoing complaints. WS routinely collects blood samples or oral swabs from species taken or handled during normal control activities for monitoring the presence of plague, avian influenza, and other diseases. In May, **118** samples were processed.

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

## Resource Protection

### State Office

During May, 2012, the State Office trap loaning program checked out **9** cage traps. The species distribution for the traps loaned out were: raccoons (**2**), ground squirrels (**3**), striped skunks (**1**), wood rats (**1**) and marmots (**2**). Information regarding baits to use, trap placement tactics, handling of trapped animals and safety precautions to take when working with the wild-life species were provided for all equipment loaned.

**East District**

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, Wildlife Specialist (WS) Nathan Fowler confirmed the loss of two adult ewes and three yearling sheep to coyote predation. The value of the five sheep was placed at \$1,250. After providing technical assistance in the form of non lethal recommendations, WS Fowler set several pieces of equipment in an effort to stop the predation. WS Fowler also requested the assistance of the Elko plane. On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Elko plane responded to the location in northern Elko County. Two adult coyotes were removed as they fed on a yearling sheep they had just killed. Three additional coyotes were also removed near the kill site. WS Fowler removed two other coyotes utilizing ground equipment, bringing the damage to an end. The sheep producer was very pleased with the help provided by Wildlife Services.



On May 1<sup>st</sup>, WS Matt Spires confirmed the loss of four lambs to coyote predation. The lambs were valued at \$800. WS Spires and his well trained decoy dog were able to locate and remove two adult coyotes near the kill site. A necropsy of both coyotes revealed that they had lamb in their stomachs. Knowing that several other coyotes were involved in the predation, WS Spires requested the assistance of the Ely plane. On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Ely plane responded to the location in northern White Pine County, removing three additional adult coyotes near the kill site. WS Spires provided technical assistance in the form of non lethal recommendation to help prevent future predation issues. Many of the recommendation were already in place including: guard dogs, carcass removal and night penning. The sheep producer expressed his appreciation to the East District Supervisor for all the help provided by WS Spires and the Ely plane.



On May 4<sup>th</sup>, District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett received a call concerning a problem with ravens. A sheep producer west of Ely, NV reported that ravens had pecked the eyes out of four newborn lambs and injured several others. The value of the four dead lambs was placed at \$800. The producer reported that he had already exhausted several non lethal methods including carcass removal and harassment/hazing but was still experiencing damage. The sheep producer reported that he had just observed ten ravens kill a baby lamb before he could frighten the birds away. On Saturday, May 5<sup>th</sup>, DS Bennett traveled to the ranch and confirmed the damage. DS Bennett observed more than twenty ravens in the area. DS Bennett placed out eggs treated with DRC 1339. On Monday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, DS Bennett confirmed that all the treated eggs were gone and only observed two ravens in the area. The sheep producer was very pleased with the assistance provided by Wildlife Services. DS Bennett will continue to monitor the area for possible predation. Technical assistance in the form of more non lethal recommendations was also provided to the sheep producer.

On May 5<sup>th</sup>, Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler was contacted by a sheep producer in White Pine County concerning a problem with a

mountain lion. The producer reported that a lion had killed two ewe sheep and seven lambs, valued at \$1,900. MLS Buhler traveled to the location and confirmed that a lion had indeed killed the sheep. MLS Buhler utilized his well trained tracking hounds to remove an adult female lion that weighed about 90 pounds. MLS Buhler noted that the sheep producer was currently using more than a dozen guard dogs, night penning the sheep and utilizing six sheep herders but the lion still killed the sheep.

On May 10<sup>th</sup>, WS Mac Crome confirmed the loss of one lamb valued at \$200 to raven predation. WS Crome reported seeing several ravens attacking and harassing newborn lambs over the course of several days. On May 15<sup>th</sup>, WS Crome treated the location with hard boiled chicken eggs treated with DRC-1339. After conducting a pre and post treatment inspection, WS Crome estimated that 24 ravens had been removed, bringing an end to the damage. Before treating the area, WS Crome also provided technical assistance in the form of nonlethal recommendations. Many nonlethal techniques were already in place during the depredation including: carcass removal, herding and hazing of the ravens. No further losses have been reported.

On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, WS Scott Little was checking in with sheep herders in his assigned area when he was informed about a problem with coyotes. The herder reported that coyotes had killed several lambs on a remote mountain nearby. WS Little rode his horse into the location and confirmed the loss of the lambs, valued at \$800. WS Little used calling and his well trained coyote decoy dogs to remove two large adult coyotes. A necropsy of the coyotes confirmed that they both had lamb in their stomachs. No further losses have been reported from this band of sheep and the sheep producer was very pleased with the prompt response. WS Little's fast action no doubt saved the lives of many more lambs that would have been lost to these coyotes. Technical assistance in the form of nonlethal recommendations was also provided. Many of these non lethal recommendations including night penning and guard dogs, were already in use at the time of the losses.



WS Derril Fry had a very busy month of May. WS Fry received reports concerning the loss of 13 lambs valued at \$2,600, during the month. WS Fry was able to remove three adult coyotes and three dens near the location of the losses. WS Fry also assisted the Elko plane in the removal of several other coyotes near the kills, bringing the damage under control. WS Fry provided technical assistance in the form of non lethal recommendations to help prevent future predation issues from occurring.



During May, WS Virgil Fullerton was busy protecting several bands of sheep in his assigned area. Although no losses were reported, during the month, WS Fullerton was busy checking in with sheep herders and providing technical assistance in an effort to prevent predation from taking place. WS Fullerton's cooperators are very pleased with his hard work and dedication, which greatly reduce the losses in his assigned area.

May was a very busy month for both the Ely and the Elko planes. Both planes were instrumental in solving several predation issues on sheep that were lambing in their assigned areas. Without an ef-

fective aerial program, many producers have commented that they could not stay in the sheep business in eastern Nevada.

### West District

On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, Pilot Wes Gossard and Crew Member (CM) Brandon VanderMay conducted aerial operations around several sheep producers in Washoe County. During the flight, a total of three coyotes were removed. WS Doug Koepke provided ground support during the aerial work.



On Saturday May 5<sup>th</sup>, WS Koepke received a call about a calf kill (valued at \$500) in Lyon County. WS Koepke inspected the ranch and removed three coyotes and placed equipment in the vicinity of the livestock damage. Upon equipment re-inspection, WS Koepke removed 10 coyotes with trail snares and shooting. No further livestock losses have occurred.

On May 8<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted aerial operations around several sheep bands in Lyon County. During the flight, a total of four coyotes were removed, including a pair that was taken in one pass. WS Nick Smith provided ground support.

During the week of May 7<sup>th</sup> thru May 11<sup>th</sup>, WS George Hansen spent the week trapping on eight sheep lamb bands and one goat band in Lander County. During the week, WS Hansen removed nine coyotes by utilizing leghold traps and also removed two coyote dens. WS Hansen will continue to provide livestock protection efforts in this area.



On May 14<sup>th</sup>, WS John Peter removed a 140 pound lion from hunt unit 031, with the use of a call box assisted snare. The lion was removed to protect mule deer; however the area was going to have two bands of domestic sheep in the same area, so the lion removal effort had dual benefits. WS Peter will continue to protect both mule deer and livestock in hunt unit 031.

On May 15<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted aerial operations around several sheep producers in Washoe County. During the flight, a total of six coyotes were removed. The aerial crew also located one coyote den and reported its location to WS Koepke.

On May 24<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted aerial operations on two lamb bands, in Humboldt County. During the flight, a total of eight coyotes were removed. The aerial crew also located two coyote dens for WS Peter who was providing ground support during the operation.

During the month of May, WS Smith was busy placing equipment around several different sheep producers, in Lyon County. WS Smith has been running his equipment by horseback into remote country. During the month, WS Smith removed 28 coyotes with a variety of methods. WS Smith has also assisted a rancher with a damming beaver complaint. WS Smith utilized snares and promptly removed seven beavers. WS Smith will continue to protect livestock in Lyon and Douglas County.



The West District has been busy throughout May, placing out DRC-1339 treated egg baits to target ravens around several sage grouse leks in Washoe and Humboldt Counties, as requested by the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW). Nevada boasts a high population of ravens and the West District annually removes ravens to help with isolated sage grouse nesting locations. Sage grouse

chicks usually hatch out between the middle and end of May. In a mere two weeks after hatching, sage grouse chicks can fly.

During the week of May 21<sup>st</sup> thru May 25<sup>th</sup>, DS Jack Spencer received numerous calls about coyotes killing pets and acting aggressive toward citizens in the Reno/Sparks area. An NDOW game warden also recently reported problem coyotes. On Saturday May 26<sup>th</sup>, DS Spencer visited a location near a school where a pair of coyotes was starting to act aggressively around young school kids. DS Spencer released his decoy dog in the area and let out two voice howls and in five minutes removed a pair of coyotes utilizing shooting.

During the month of May, Staff Biologist (SB) Jack Sengl completed the NDOW Mason Valley project 23. The intent of the project was to protect wild pheasants, turkeys and their nests from being raided by nest predators: mainly ravens, coyotes, raccoons and skunks. To that end, SB Sengl removed an additional 12 coyotes, two striped skunks, one raccoon and one badger from the management area, with ground equipment.



On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen conducted a field inspection on SB Sengl while he was closing out NDOW project 23. Field inspections are a great way for Directors to stay in tune with their employees as well as what is happening out in the field. The assistance was greatly appreciated by SB Sengl.

During the month of May, Wildlife Biologist (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. While conducting the assessment WB Bowers also participates in direct control of wildlife when necessary to minimize direct threats to aviation safety. During the reporting period, WB Bowers noticed sign of badgers on and around the airfield. As a result, one badger was removed from the area to reduce the threat of a badger versus aircraft incident. WB Bowers hopes to conduct some black-tail jackrabbit projects in the near future in order to reduce the attractiveness of the airfield to coyotes, badgers and red-tailed hawks.

Also during the month of May, a positive ID was received from the Smithsonian for a bird strike that occurred on a helicopter night op. WB Bowers had previously entered the strike into the safety system database and submitted a feather to the Smithsonian for possible identification. The feather was positively identified as a Vesper sparrow. This is very interesting information, as WB Bowers had not considered, or seen evidence of sparrows being a nocturnal group in the area.

During the month of May, WB Luke Barto continued protection efforts at a local airport, which included: trapping and translocation of a Red-tailed hawk; gull egg oiling at two different gull colonies that were impeding aviation safety; and predator prey base removal.

On May 29<sup>th</sup>, WB Barto assisted DS Bennett with sage-grouse protection between Austin and Fallon. DS Bennett has been conducting the work in the past, but he offered to hand the project over to WB Barto, providing him with excellent development and experience in the process. During the day,



DRC-1339 treated egg baits were placed outside of the leks for the ravens, and WB Barto sight shot one badger that was on its way to the lek. WB Barto will close out this project the second week of June.

### **New and Developing Methods**

Nothing to Report.

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

Nothing to Report.

### **Information and Communication**

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, SD Jensen attended the Nevada Board of Agriculture meeting in Reno.

On May 16<sup>th</sup>, SD Jensen joined the FSA Administrator, as well as other USDA agency representative in Fallon, to present program overviews for various Tribal Chairs and Council members as well as local producers.

### **Emerging Trends/Issues**

Nothing to Report.

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

Nothing to Report.

### **Future Meetings and Events**

June 19<sup>th</sup>, N-1 Grazing Board Meeting in Elko. SD Jensen and DS Bennett to attend.

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# Wildlife Services



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