

September 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

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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 September, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **3.6** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$50.7** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$2.3** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **823** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$23,901** in damage and WS Specialists verified another **\$19,731** in damage to other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During September, coyotes accounted for **\$15,200** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **247** 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 September, **34** samples were processed.

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

Resource Protection

State Office

During September, 2012, the State Office trap loaning program checked out **10** cage traps. The species distribution for the traps loaned out were: raccoons (**2**) and skunks (**8**). 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 September 5th, while working on a band of sheep north of Ely, Nevada, that was experiencing coyote predation, District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett confirmed the loss of two ewes and four lambs to mountain lion predation. Later that day, DS Bennett contacted Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler concerning the incident. The damage occurred in a remote region of central White Pine County. On September 6th, MLS Buhler responded to the location. A quick check of the area indicated that the lion had returned and killed one additional lamb, valued at \$150. MLS Buhler put eight well trained hounds on the track. About two hours later, the dogs treed the lion. MLS Buhler was able to ride his mule into the extremely rough canyon and with one well placed shot, dispatched the lion. The lion was an adult male that weighed about 160 pounds and was six years old. A necropsy of the lion confirmed its stomach contents were lamb meat and wool. No further losses have been reported and DS Bennett provided technical assistance in the form of non lethal recommendations to help prevent future problems. The lion was skinned and turned into the Ely Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) office the same day.

During the first week of September, Wildlife Specialist (WS) Virgil Fullerton confirmed the loss of two lambs, valued at \$400. WS Fullerton set several traps near the kills. Within one week, WS Fullerton was able to trap the two offending coyotes. No further losses have been reported on the band of sheep located in northern White Pine County.



On September 6th, Staff Biologist (SB) Jack Sengl traveled to Ely, NV to assist the East District with protecting lambs from coyote predation up in the Schell Creek Range. With higher than normal losses this summer, SB Sengl's help was requested by DS Bennett. A band of sheep was experiencing very high predation issues from both coyotes and mountain lions. MLS Buhler had previously removed one depredating lion but coyotes continued to cause high losses. As the herder moved his sheep northward from canyon to canyon thru the summer, he had incurred considerable losses from coyotes (39 lambs valued at \$7,800). It seemed that with the drought, rodents and berries were hard to come by. So the coyotes from previous depredations would follow the sheep, and as the sheep moved into new country, new coyotes would depredate the lambs as well despite the attentive efforts of the herder (e.g. sleeping with the sheep where they were benched, employing his guard dog and herding dogs). In response to the depredations, on September 7th, DS Bennett and SB Sengl called in one coyote from the foothills and removed it. On September 8th, MLS Buhler used two of his mules to pack SB Sengl's tent and gear into the remote canyon to be near the herder (with SB Sengl trailing). SB Sengl spent the remainder of the time keeping up with the herder and sheep from before morning till after dark, scouting the high country for places to set up for coyotes, making call stands and sight shooting coyotes until MLS Buhler returned on September 13th, to pack out SB Sengl's gear. The result of the effort was the removal of an addi-

tional four coyotes near the sheep and a 60% reduction of lamb loss for the time period. In the coming days, the sheep will trail over to a canyon that allows vehicle access, so DS Bennett will continue protection efforts. SB Sengl was very appreciative of the opportunity and thanks DS Bennett for the opportunity and MLS Buhler for packing him up/out and selecting a camp location that kept SB Sengl from losing his tent and gear to the lightning storms and accompanying torrent of wind and rain.

On September 12th, WS Matt Spires confirmed the loss of ten lambs to coyote predation. The attacks occurred in northern Elko County, the value of the lambs was placed at \$2,000. WS Spires placed several traps near the kills. During the next week, WS Spires trapped two coyotes near the kill locations. WS Spires also requested aerial support. Since the Elko plane was down for a scheduled engine replacement, the Ely plane responded to the location. During the morning's flight, five additional coyotes were removed, bringing the damage to an end. No further losses have been reported.

On September 17th, MLS Buhler received a call concerning the loss of two lambs to a mountain lion. The following morning MLS Buhler rode his mule into the remote sheep camp, north of Ely, Nevada. For the following two days, MLS Buhler trailed the lion near the sheep. On September 20th, the lion killed one more lamb, bringing the total dollar loss to \$600, for the three lambs. MLS Buhler's well trained hounds followed the lion into a remote canyon a short distance from the sheep. MLS Buhler was able to remove the two year old male lion, bringing an end to the damage. The sheep producer was very pleased with the outcome. No further losses have been reported, on the band of sheep.

On September 20th, the Ely Crew Member (CM) confirmed the loss of one lamb to coyote predation. The value of the lamb was placed at \$200. The following morning, the Ely CM returned to the site of the kill and called one stand. The Ely CM was able to call in and shoot the offending coyote. The adult female coyote was killed very close to the depredated lamb. To help save time and money, it is common for both the Elko and the Ely Crew Members to conduct field work when not doing aerial related activities. No further losses have been reported.

During the week of September 17th, WS Dayne Barnes removed an adult male lion from the Delamar Mountain Range. WS Barnes had found the lion's track several days before and had set several pieces of equipment in an effort to remove the lion. The lion was eventually treed by WS Barnes' dogs. This NDOW project is in hunt unit 241 and is designed to help mule deer, bighorn sheep and other wildlife in the unit. WS Barnes also removed several coyotes, during the month of September. The lion was skinned and turned into NDOW in Lincoln County.



On September 25th, WS Derril Fry confirmed the loss of two adult ewe sheep to coyote predation. The losses occurred in southern Elko County; the value of the two sheep was placed at \$500. Due to the depredations, WS Fry requested the assistance of the Elko plane. On September 26th, with WS Fry acting as the ground crew, the Elko plane responded to the location. During the morning's flight, the aerial crew observed the offending coyote feeding on one of the kills. The adult male coyote was promptly removed, ending the damage. WS Fry provided technical assistance in the form of non lethal recommendations. No further losses have been reported and the sheep producer was very pleased with the assistance received by both the Elko aerial crew and WS Fry.

During the middle of September, WS Nathan Fowler confirmed the loss of three lamb's to coyote

predation. WS Fowler found two lambs while searching from his horse and the herder showed him an additional one. In response, WS Fowler caught one female coyote (with lamb in her stomach), in ground equipment. WS Fowler removed a total of nine coyotes for this month from Copper Basin and Martin Creek. All the lambs shipped on September 18th and 20th, from Copper Basin and Martin Creek.

WS Billy Taylor spent the month of September protecting four bands of sheep in eastern White Pine County. No confirmed losses were reported, during the month. WS Taylor was able to remove several coyotes in very close proximity to the sheep. Removing these coyotes no doubt helped prevent losses in these areas that have experience very high losses in the past. WS Taylor also provided technical assistance in the form of non lethal recommendations, to help prevent losses.



September saw most all lambs come out of the high country and be shipped to market. East District employees are now starting to transition towards their winter work areas. Many employees take some well deserved leave during this time and others take the opportunity to clean up their camps and equipment in preparation for the upcoming winter's work. Although losses were higher than normal this past summer, many East District cooperators have expressed their appreciation for all the hard work that was done by the East District Wildlife Specialists. Late September and early October will see sheep start trailing toward the winter ranges in Elko, White Pine, Lincoln and Nye Counties. Almost twenty bands of sheep will also start arriving from surrounding States, including California, Idaho and Utah.



During September, WS Mac Crome confirmed the loss of five lambs to coyote predation. The value of the lambs was placed at \$1,000. Using traps, snares and calling, WS Crome was able to remove twelve coyotes, bringing the damage to an end. The sheep producers that WS Crome has been working with this summer are very pleased with his hard work and dedication to protecting their livestock.

During the first part of September, WS Scott Little confirmed the loss of one calf, valued at \$750. The rancher reported seeing several coyotes chasing and harassing other calves in his pastures. WS Little responded to the location and removed ten coyotes, using traps. No further losses have been reported and the rancher was very pleased with WS Little's response to his request.

West District

During the month of September, Wildlife Biologist (WB) Zack Bowers continued conducting a Wildlife Hazard Assessment (WHA) at a military installation in Northern NV, while removing threats to aviation safety where necessary. Highlights include: documenting wildlife strikes caused by a horned lark, mourning dove and barn swallow (found on a runway); the removal of four coyotes and one raccoon from on and around the airfield by utilizing ground equipment.

On Saturday, September 1st, DS Jack Spencer conducted an early morning calling stand near a suburban area in Reno. A local NDOW warden had been receiving coyote complaints and gave several locations in Reno and Sparks where coyotes were killing pets and causing public health issues. DS Spencer made two calling stands, three coyotes appeared and DS Spencer selectively targeted the two larger males for removal. No additional coyote problems have been reported at this particular area; however, with drought coupled with available urban resources (such as garbage, unattended pets and their food/water) coyotes will continue to exploit the urban environment. WS continues to

reach out to the public to express that urban resources need to be actively managed to reduce the threat of drawing coyotes into back yards. Unfortunately, many homeowners that lose pets call after they have already lost their pet to coyote predation. As temperatures drop with the coming of fall/winter, it should be expected that coyotes will be seen more frequently and vigilance must always be maintained. As hunting and sport trapping (traditional management options) are not allowed in urban areas, coyotes move through neighborhoods with minimal threat of being harmed. In the past months, over 30 pets have been killed (those are only the ones reported to WS) by coyotes in the Reno/Sparks area. WS will continue to assist where/when possible.

On September 4th, Pilot Wes Gossard and CM Brandon VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around a sheep producer, in Lander County, that had lost two sheep (valued at \$400) to coyotes. During the flight, a total of 12 coyotes were removed in the immediate vicinity of the sheep band. WS George Hansen provided valuable ground support during aerial operations. To date, no further livestock losses have been reported and the rancher was pleased with the protection efforts by Wildlife Services.



On September 5th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around a sheep producer, in Humboldt County, that had lost one lamb (valued at \$100) to coyotes. The aerial crew flew around the depredation site which resulted in the removal of six coyotes. WS John Peter provided ground support by locating several of the coyotes for the aerial crew and using his well-trained coyote dogs to trail on coyotes in heavy vegetation. No further livestock losses have been reported.

On September 11th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around sheep that were being killed by coyotes, in Pershing County. The sheep were located at high elevation in a mountainous area that is difficult to fly. The flight resulted in the removal of five coyotes. WS Doug Koepke provided ground support. The cooperater was very pleased with the protection efforts.

On September 10th, a livestock producer, from Douglas County, reported that four sheep (valued at \$800) had been killed by a black bear. WS Nick Smith inspected the dead sheep and confirmed that a black bear was responsible for the livestock losses. WS Smith placed a “bear-bucket” foot snare at the damage site and the following morning, removed the 150 pound depredating black bear. No further livestock losses have been reported and the rancher was very pleased with WS Smith’s protection efforts.



On September 12th, the West District’s aerial crew responded to a call for assistance from the California Wildlife Services Program. Coyotes had moved in around several calving and sheep areas, resulting in numerous livestock losses. The early morning aerial flight resulted in the removal of eight coyotes. WS George Alfonzo of the California Wildlife Services Program provided valuable ground support.



On September 12th, WS Koepke was busy checking ground equipment around several calving areas in Churchill County. Coyotes started showing up on the calving areas and rather than waiting for livestock losses, WS Koepke placed trail snares and leghold

traps in the area. Upon inspection, WS Koepke removed a total of eight coyotes by utilizing leghold traps. WS Koepke will continue to protect livestock in his large work area.

On September 13th, the West District's aerial crew flew around several bands of sheep, in Lander County, that had suffered losses to coyotes. The aerial crew managed to remove three coyotes in close proximity to the sheep, despite less than optimal conditions. WS Hansen provided ground support during aerial hunting operations.

On August 17th, while on leave, WB Bowers was notified that bird remains had been discovered on the taxi-way of a military installation, during a routine airfield inspection. WB Bowers advised that the remains be placed in the freezer, until WB Bowers returned. WB Bowers sent feathers from the remains to the Smithsonian Institute Feather ID Lab for identification. In late September, WB Bowers received notice that the previous unidentified bird had been identified by the Smithsonian as a chipping sparrow. WB Bowers included the information in the report and released it into the military reporting system.

On September 19th, Pilot Gossard and CM Vandermay flew several bands of sheep, in Humboldt County, that were being killed by coyotes. The aerial crew removed a total of 11 coyotes, during the morning hunt. WS Peter provided ground support for the operation by locating several coyotes from the ground and directing the aerial crew to the coyotes' location(s).

During the month of September, WS Smith responded to several black bear complaints. The first complaint was a bear in close proximity to a cooperators residence, eating apples, which also placed the bear in close proximity to domestic sheep. The cooperator was very uncomfortable with the bear's proximity to the residence and his sheep. WS Smith worked in coordination with NDOW to aversively condition the bear to change its behavior by running the bear off with his trailing hounds. Another black bear complaint involved a bear that had been monitored by NDOW for some time. It turns out the bear had lost its tracking collar, but still had the telemetry equipment on a separate collar. WS Smith worked in cooperation with NDOW to capture the bear and re-collar it so that NDOW could continue to monitor the bear and gain information from the bear's movement.

On September 26th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around several sheep producers, in Lyon County, to stop depredations from occurring. During the flight, one offending coyote was removed. WS Smith provided ground support.

On September 27th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an aerial operation around several calving areas, in Humboldt County. During the fall calving period, coyotes move in to exploit the vulnerable newborn calves. During the flight, a total of 11 coyotes were removed. WS Peter provided ground support. Protection efforts will be ongoing on the calving areas.



Throughout the month of September, WB Luke Barto, continued to protect aviation safety at a local airport, removing: one red tail hawk, two raccoons, 20 rock doves, three striped skunks and one feral cat. WB Barto also utilized non-lethal pyrotechnics to disperse nine mallard ducks and one great blue heron from the above mentioned airport.

WB Barto received several calls throughout the month of September, regarding predation of domestic pets by coyotes within the city of Sparks. WB Barto, with the assistance of local NDOW wardens, met with home and business owners that had regularly and recently seen the problem coyotes. After making several call-stands in and around urban areas of Sparks, WB Barto called in a pair of coyotes, removing one adult female believed to be responsible for the recent attacks. Efforts to remove the remaining problem coyotes will continue into October.



New and Developing Methods

Nothing to Report.

Valuing and Investing in Employees

Nothing to report.

Information and Communication

On September 14th, DS Bennett and SB Sengl traveled to Mount Charleston, NV for the Nevada Trapper's Association "Trapper Education Day", held on September 15th. DS Bennett provided a program overview and a coyote trapping demo. SB Sengl provided a presentation on wildlife diseases that trappers need to be mindful of while running their traplines. SB Sengl also provided information concerning the importance of monitoring for wildlife diseases. The program overview, demo and disease presentation were well received by the roughly 80 attendees, including a Nevada State Assemblywoman and entities concerned about the effects of trapping on the ecosystem and companion animals. Many good questions were asked and answered. DS Bennett and SB Sengl extend their appreciation for being invited to the event, to Mr. Joel Blakesly (Nevada Trapper's Association President) and Mr. Tracy Truman.



Emerging Trends/Issues

Nothing to Report.

Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights (EEO/CR)

Nothing to Report.

Future Meetings and Events

Nothing to Report.



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