

December 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 December, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **7.3** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$66** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$10.4** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **76** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$2,806** in damage and WS Specialists verified another **\$20,448** in damage to other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During December, coyotes accounted for **\$17,954** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **379** 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 December, **6** samples were processed.

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

## Resource Protection

### State Office

During December, 2012, the State Office trap loaning program checked out **3** cage traps. The species distribution for the traps loaned out were: badgers (**1**) and raccoons (**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 December 5<sup>th</sup>, Wildlife Specialist (WS) Virgil Fullerton confirmed the loss of four adult sheep, valued at \$1,000, to coyote predation. WS Fullerton placed several traps near the kills in response to the depredations. WS Fullerton also requested the assistance of the Ely plane. On December 7<sup>th</sup>, the Ely plane responded to the location in eastern White Pine County and removed six coyotes, near the kills. WS Fullerton also trapped two additional coyotes, bringing an end to the damage. No further losses have been reported and WS Fullerton will continue to monitor the area for losses.

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, WS Matt Spires confirmed the loss of four adult sheep to coyote predation. The value of the sheep was placed at \$750. WS Spires set several traps near the kills in response to the depredations. During the next several days, WS Spires removed three coyotes, near the kills. No further losses have been reported on the band of sheep. WS Spires will continue to check in with the sheep owner and herder, concerning losses.



On December 7<sup>th</sup>, the East District office received a call concerning the loss of at least ten calves, valued at almost \$8,000. The rancher reported that coyotes had killed at least ten of his calves and he was seeing several coyotes in and around his cattle. On December 10<sup>th</sup>, District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett traveled to the remote ranch, in Nye County. DS Bennett confirmed that coyotes had killed several calves and observed considerable coyote sign in the area. On December 11<sup>th</sup>, the Ely plane responded to the location. During the morning's flight, the plane located and removed four coyotes, near the kills. DS Bennett spent two nights and removed three additional coyotes using calling and shooting. Work will be ongoing until the problem is solved. DS Bennett also provided technical assistance to help prevent future problems.

On December 10<sup>th</sup>, WS Scott Little confirmed the loss of one ewe sheep, valued at \$250. WS Little reported that the kill took place in a remote location in Nye County and confirmed that coyotes were responsible. WS Little placed several traps near the kill. During the next few days, two coyotes were trapped and one coyote was shot, bringing a quick end to the damage. WS Little provided technical assistance to help prevent future losses and will continue to monitor the area for predation.

On December 16<sup>th</sup>, DS Bennett received a call at home from the National Safety Transportation Board (NTSB). The NTSB requested the assistance of the Ely Wildlife Service's plane to investigate and document a civil aviation plane crash that had occurred the previous day in the general Ely area. DS Bennett contacted the Ely pilot who in turn contacted the Cedar City Aviation Center for approval to assist. Despite the fact that it was Sunday morning, the Ely pilot assisted. The NTSB and the White Pine Sheriff Department expressed their appreciation for all the help they received.

During the month of December, the Elko plane started flying many cattle ranches in Elko County. All of the ranches flown have had historically high losses to coyote predation. Removing coyotes in the pasture that will see the most calving activities, helps prevent losses. Many cattle ranchers in the area are very pleased with the efforts of both the Wildlife Specialists in Elko County and the Elko aerial crew.



Several bands of sheep arrived in eastern Elko County, during the month of December, keeping WS Mac Crome and WS Nathan Fowler busy. At least twelve bands of sheep spend each winter in the area along the Nevada-Utah border. Both specialists have been removing coyotes in areas that have experienced very high losses, during the past several winters.

WS Derril Fry confirmed several hundred dollars in damage to pastures caused by badgers. The damage occurred in southern Elko County. To date, WS Fry has removed several badgers in an effort to minimize the damage caused by the badgers. The farmer has been very pleased with all the help he has received from Wildlife Services and WS Fry.

WS Scott Little has been busy protecting at least six bands of sheep, in Nye County. WS Little leaves his duty station on Monday morning and stays in his field camp all week and returns home on Friday. Staying in the field camps provided by Wildlife Services, saves both time and money, cutting down on mileage and driving time to and from the work areas. Most East District employees stay in camp all week, saving thousands of dollars in time and fuel.



WS Dayne Barnes continues to work on Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) project 6A. The project is designed to protect bighorn sheep, mule deer and other wildlife near Caliente, Nevada. Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler traveled to the location and looked for lion activity for a week with WS Barnes. During the week, only one old lion track was found and it left the work area and has not returned. WS Barnes has been utilizing both trail cameras and lion call boxes in an effort to identify potential predation issues. Work is ongoing in the area.

On December 19<sup>th</sup>, MLS Buhler received a call concerning a possible mountain lion problem, in Nye County. The following morning, MLS Buhler traveled to the sheep ranch and confirmed that a lion had killed three adult sheep. The sheep were one adult ram and two ewes, valued at \$1,100. MLS Buhler put seven of his well trained tracking hounds on the fresh lion track. A short distance later, MLS Buhler treed an adult female lion. The lion was a very old female with worn down teeth. MLS Buhler estimated its age at more than ten years old. The sheep producer was very pleased with MLS Buhler's fast response.



On December 26<sup>th</sup>, MLS Buhler received a call concerning a problem with a lion in central Nye County. The following morning, MLS Buhler responded to the remote ranch. The sheep producer reported that during the daytime, a lion had entered one of their pastures and killed two yearling sheep, valued at \$300. The sheep owner said they had seen both sheep earlier in the

morning alive and then went back later in the day to move them to another field and found both of them dead with fresh lion tracks in the snow. MLS Buhler placed seven of his best dogs on the fresh tracks at the kill site and treed an older adult female lion, about two miles away. The lion was in very poor condition due to two large open wounds on its side. MLS Buhler could not determine the cause of the lion's injuries. The sheep producer was very happy with MLS Buhler's quick response to the situation.

### West District

On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, Pilot Wes Gossard and Crew Member (CM) Brandon VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several fall calving areas, in Humboldt County. During the flight, 18 coyotes were removed. Several of the coyotes were taken on nearby ridge tops where the coyotes were seen by livestock producers, during morning feeding. WS John Peter provided ground crew efforts, during aerial operations.



On December 6<sup>th</sup>, DS Jack Spencer conducted a routine field inspection with WS George Hansen, in Lander County. During the inspection, the two removed two coyotes by calling and WS Hansen removed one additional coyote by utilizing leghold traps around several sheep bands. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

On December 7<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation, around several cattle producers who called and requested assistance. During the flight, 38 coyotes were removed. DS Spencer was also conducting a routine field inspection with WS Peter and the aerial crew, during the early morning flight. In one calving location, the aerial crew removed 15 coyotes in 15 passes, a true testament of their abilities. Protection efforts will be on going.



On December 10<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight, around several calving areas, in Lander County. During the flight, 12 coyotes were removed, including a group of eight coyotes, feeding on a freshly killed calf (valued at \$400). WS Hansen provided ground crew efforts, during aerial operations.

During the month of December, WS Koepke was busy running equipment around several fall calving areas and one sheep producer in Churchill, Lyon and Pershing Counties. WS Koepke tended his equipment, near the livestock sites and removed 18 coyotes by utilizing leghold traps, trail snares and firearms. To date, livestock losses have been minimal and WS Koepke will continue to protect livestock in his large work area.

On December 11<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several winter sheep bands, in Pershing County. During the flight, five coyotes were removed. WS Koepke provided valuable ground crew efforts during aerial hunting activities.

On December 19<sup>th</sup>, WS Nick Smith and DS Spencer, conducted a feral pigeon removal project, in

Douglas County. A cattle producer reported that several hundred pigeons were causing fecal buildup in barns and livestock feed consumption (valued at \$1,700). DRC-1339 treated on whole kernel corn was placed and a total of 267 offending pigeons were removed. The cattle producer was pleased with the protection efforts.



On December 19<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an aerial operation, in Lander County, around several sheep bands. During the flight, 17 coyotes were removed. WS Hansen located over half of the coyotes for the aerial crew. Protection efforts are ongoing.

During the month of December, WS Peter removed 32 coyotes, with the use of firearms, M-44s and snares from around several cattle producers in Humboldt County. During the freezing winter months, the M-44 device is often easier to maintain and use than traditional traps. WS Peter will continue to protect livestock in his large work area.



Each week, the West District receives numerous calls about urban coyotes, especially in the Sparks area. Since summer, over 50 domestic dogs have been reportedly killed by coyotes. Recently, DS Spencer talked with a local police department and they reported that they receive at least 30 calls a week about coyote complaints. Currently, State Office personnel provide technical assistance and promote non-lethal measures for citizens, for non public safety issues.

During the month of December, WS Smith was busy removing 16 coyotes, to address numerous livestock complaints, in Lyon and Douglas Counties. WS Smith has been utilizing firearms, trail snares, leghold traps, and M-44s around several large sheep ranches and calving areas, with good success. Several of WS Smith's cooperators commented to DS Spencer about the good protection efforts WS Smith has been conducting.

During the month of December, WS Ben Miller was busy placing and checking equipment on the NDOW Washoe County Mule Deer Project (hunt unit 014). WS Miller has recently seen a sharp increase in coyotes, since snow coverage has forced coyotes from the north, into his work area. WS Miller will continue to protect mule deer, antelope and bighorn sheep in his designated protection area.



During the month of December, Wildlife Biologist (WB) Zack Bowers started writing the Wildlife Hazard Assessment (WHA) for a Naval Air Station (NAS) in Northern NV. The survey portion of the WHA involved conducting structured surveys on the airfield and the surrounding area, as well as general observations. This data was collected for a 12 month period in order to determine seasonal and spatial trends of wildlife usage on the airfield and surrounding area. Now that the data collection

is complete, WB Bowers will analyze the data and write the WHA, which will include recommendations regarding species management, habitat alterations, and agricultural management practices.

Throughout the month of December, WB Luke Barto continued to protect aviation safety at a local airport, removing: 14 pigeons, one raccoon, six European starlings and one English house sparrow. WB Barto also utilized non-lethal harassment techniques to disperse: 100 American crows, 156 ducks, 165 Canada geese, two great blue herons and one northern harrier. WB Barto also transferred two feral/free ranging domestic cats from the aforementioned airport. Domestic animals such as cats and dogs that are captured on airport property are then transferred to Washoe County Animal Control for the safety of the animal as well as aviation.



WB Barto also continued with routine runway-surveys that assess aviation safety threats abundance and frequency on/around the airfield. It is important to continue surveillance of wildlife activities, in order to recognize possible threats and be proactive in preventing strikes.

## **New and Developing Methods**

Nothing to Report.

## **Valuing and Investing in Employees**

Nothing to Report

## **Information and Communication**

On December 12<sup>th</sup>, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen attended the Nevada Board of Agriculture Meeting, in Sparks.

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, SD Jensen and DS Spencer attended the N-2 Grazing Board Meeting, in Winnemucca.

On December 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, SD Jensen attended the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners Meeting, in Reno

## **Emerging Trends/Issues**

Nothing to Report.

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

Nothing to Report.

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### Future Meetings and Events

Nevada Board of Agriculture Meeting, in Sparks. March 26<sup>th</sup>, SD Jensen to attend.



USDA APHIS

# Wildlife Services



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