

# The Trapline

United States Department of  
Agriculture

Animal & Plant Health  
Inspection Service

Wildlife Services



*Cooperating with:*

Nevada

Department of Agriculture

Division of Animal Industries



[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 Animal Industries (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 **6.2** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$125.9** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$8.1** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **68** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$3,000** in damage and WS Specialists verified **\$12,586** in damage to other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During December, coyotes accounted for **\$6,975** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **402** 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, **no** samples were processed.

*The following excerpts are a selection of activities and events of this program which occurred during the month of December, 2013.*

## Resource Protection

### State Office

During June, 2013, the State Office trap loaning program was suspended because of personnel deployed to Afghanistan. The State Office hopes to resume the trap loaning program in November-December. Technical assistance to assist Nevadans with alleviation of damage will still be provided, as well as response to reasonable imminent threats to human health and safety.

## East District

On December 4<sup>th</sup>, Wildlife Specialist (WS) Mac Crome removed two coyotes with the use of trail snares to protect livestock wintering along the Utah/Nevada border. WS Crome will continue to provide protection efforts in his work area.



On December 5<sup>th</sup>, WS Matt Spires confirmed the loss of four adult ewe sheep to coyote predation. The value of the four ewes was placed at \$600. The damage occurred in northern White Pine County, near the Elko County line. On December 6<sup>th</sup>, the Ely plane responded to the location. During the morning's operation, seven coyotes were removed near the band of sheep experiencing the problems. No further losses have been reported and WS Spires continues to monitor the area for predation issues.

Also on December 5<sup>th</sup>, WS Scott Little received a call concerning the loss of one ewe sheep, valued at \$150. WS Little traveled to the location and confirmed that the sheep had been killed by coyotes. Since the kill was still very fresh, WS Little decided to follow the coyote tracks away from the kill and make some call stands. With the use of his well-trained coyote decoy dogs, WS Little was able to call and shoot two adults coyotes near the kill. Both coyotes had meat and wool in their stomachs. No further losses have been reported and WS Little continues to monitor the sheep in his designated work area.



On December 9<sup>th</sup>, WS Randy Evans confirmed the loss of one ewe sheep to coyote predation. The damage occurred in eastern Elko County near the Utah border, the value of the ewe was placed at \$250. The next day, WS Evans was able to call and shoot three coyotes near the kill, bringing an end to the damage. WS Evans also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future depredation issues.

Throughout the month of December, the East District Ely Pilot remained busy responding to livestock losses to coyotes in his work area, as well as country typically covered by our East District Elko Pilot. Our Pilot assigned to the Elko County and surrounding areas has been out for medical reasons. The assistance from the Ely Pilot and area Crew Members has been, and is, greatly appreciated.

## West District

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, WS Doug Koepke removed a coyote that had killed 31 goat kids the previous month. The coyote had been gone for weeks after the depredations, and then shortly after a snow storm, WS Koepke found the coyote's tracks leaving



the goat pasture. WS Koepke followed the tracks for several miles before jumping and promptly dispatching the coyote with his firearm. No further livestock losses have occurred and the goat rancher was pleased that the losses had ceased.

During the month of December, residents in the south Reno area reported sighting of three lions in three different locations. At the request of the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), District Supervisor (DS) Jack Spencer investigated one of the sightings as it was tied to public safety. As in this case, some urban areas have populations of feral horses, which provide an alternate food source for the lions. As with coyote issues, urban lion sightings and issues seem to be growing each year in the Reno and Sparks area. Where possible, residents are provided technical assistance to reduce the chance that they are contributing to the situation by feeding the horses near the urban area.

During the month of December, WS John Peter was busy protecting several winter sheep bands and a dozen or so calving areas from coyotes. WS Peter has been receiving several coyote complaints each week over a large geographic area. In response, WS Peter utilized M-44 devices to remove 37 coyotes and firearms to remove an additional four. WS Peter likes to switch from traps to M-44 devices when the ground is prone to freezing, as he can operate more efficiently and cover a greater area. WS Peter will continue to protect livestock in Humboldt, Pershing and Washoe Counties.



On December 6<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Wes Gossard and Crew Member (CM) Brandon VanderMay conducted aerial operations around several calving areas in Humboldt County. During the flight, 22 coyotes were removed. All of the coyotes were around the cows. It is common during the calving period to have coyotes congregate in large numbers around calving areas especially with the onset of cold temperatures. WS Peter provided ground support.

On December 9<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several calving areas in Humboldt County. A rancher reported that two calves (valued at \$1,500) had been killed and fed upon by coyotes. The rancher reported “packs” of coyotes. The aerial crew removed 27 coyotes including two groups of six coyotes, which were all within close proximity of the calving area. WS Peter provided ground support.

On December 10<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several calving areas in Humboldt County. During the flight, 18 coyotes were removed. Cattle producers had been calling everyday requesting assistance during calving. WS Peter provided valuable ground support.

On December 11<sup>th</sup>, WS Nick Smith placed DRC-1339 treated egg baits around several sheep bands

in Lyon County that were having raven problems for a few of the sheep lambing. WS Smith removed 18 ravens and to date no further problems have occurred. Ranchers in this area have reported a tremendous increase in raven numbers in the past few years. During the spring lambing season ravens are especially hard on vulnerable lambs. The rancher was pleased with WS Smith's protection efforts.

On December 12<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight with tough weather conditions around several calving areas in Humboldt County. One producer reported that two calves were injured by coyotes (one had its tail ripped off) in about a square mile area. During the flight, 24 coyotes were removed including 14 coyotes in one location. It can be tough raising livestock when there are 24 coyotes per square mile present. WS Peter provided valuable ground support. The rancher was very pleased with the protection efforts and has had no further livestock problems.



On December 16<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several calving areas in Humboldt County. During the flight, 20 coyotes were removed in an area that cattle producers had reported the loss of two calves (valued at \$1,600).

On December 19<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted aerial operations around several ranches in Lander and Humboldt Counties. Because the livestock damage sites were spread over several hundred miles, two ground crews were required to keep radio contact. During the flight, 14 coyotes were removed. WS George Hansen and WS Koepke provided valuable ground support.

On December 20<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several winter sheep bands in Pershing County. During the flight, seven coyotes were removed. The winter sheep bands had experience few problems with coyotes, however, several herders started seeing coyotes show up around the sheep. WS Koepke and WS Peter provided valuable ground support by locating half of the coyotes for the aerial crew by howling.

On December 31<sup>st</sup>, the aerial crew had several livestock locations in Lander and Humboldt County in need of aerial assistance. The aerial crew flew several sheep producers and three calving areas that resulted in the removal of 15 coyotes. The aerial crew flew almost eight hours straight for the day, from dark to dark, to help address each of the livestock complaints. WS Hansen and WS Koepke provided ground support. Protection efforts are ongoing.



During the month of December, WS Ben Miller was busy checking equipment on the Washoe County Mule Deer project (hunt unit 014). During the month, WS Miller removed coyotes by calling, trapping and trail snaring. WS Miller recently found sign of a female lion that moved into a canyon where 40 bighorn sheep reside. If the lion stays in the area, then it will be removed. This project will be ending June 30<sup>th</sup>.

On December 17<sup>th</sup>, a children's hospital employee in Carson City reported that a large coyote was seen walking into the hospital (through the front door). NDOW law enforcement considered the situation a public safety issue and WS Smith responded to the call. On December 18<sup>th</sup>, WS Smith made a calling stand nearby with a local Warden and five coyotes came to a single stand. WS Smith removed one coyote by method of calling. Protection efforts will likely be ongoing with each new public safety call that comes in. Coyotes are very abundant in the Carson City area and if a coyote is living in urban areas then it's likely to be causing a wide variety of problems such as eating pets or hanging around children.

During the month of December, Wildlife Biologist (WB) Zack Bowers continued to deter horned larks, European starlings, coyotes and other wildlife from using/crossing a military airfield. In an effort to keep these species from crossing the airfield, WB Bowers has utilized several methods of harassment. The cold weather, during December, prevented the propane cannons from functioning properly. To compensate for the nonfunctioning propane cannons, WB Bowers increased time spent on the airfield. WB Bowers harassed nine species of birds from on and around the airfield including horned larks, mallards, great blue herons and red-tailed hawks. WB Bowers also confirmed that two sheep had been killed by coyotes on a property bordering the airfield. WB Bowers checked out the situation and set equipment to protect the sheep from any further predation and reduce the likelihood of the coyote or scavenging birds from becoming an issue to aviation safety. Non-lethal recommendations were provided to the livestock producer who had already installed motion lights in an effort to protect his sheep. Fortunately, for the livestock producer, his sheep and aviation safety, the coyotes have not returned. WB Bowers will continue to monitor the situation and the general safety zone of the airfield.



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Also during the month of December, WB Bowers attended the quarterly bird animal strike hazard (BASH) meeting. During the meeting, WB Bowers gave a presentation showing a summary of BASH events since his arrival in October of 2011. There have been many accomplishments and progress made towards decreasing BASH hazards since that time. The wildlife hazard assessment has been completed. Steps have been taken to decrease wildlife activity on and around the airfield, as exemplified above. The number of reported strikes in 2013 show approximately a fifty percent reduction compared to the number reported in 2011 and 2012. In addition, WB Bowers also gave a run-down of species likely to increase on and around the airfield in the coming quarter.

Throughout the month of December, WB Luke Barto remained busy, implementing a wildlife hazard

management plan at a local airport. Specifically, a “point count” wildlife survey was conducted to track changes of wildlife abundance and frequency at/around the airport. Additionally, pyrotechnics were utilized to harass 440 ducks and 305 Canada geese from on and around the airport. Equipment was set to capture a coyote whose track was found during a perimeter check following a storm while an American kestrel and a large adult male raccoon were removed after other non-lethal methods failed to keep the wildlife away from aircraft movements. One bird strike was reported for the above mentioned airport with no reported damage.

## New and Developing Methods

Nothing to Report

## Valuing and Investing in Employees

On December 19<sup>th</sup>, Wildlife Services’ Deputy Administrator Bill Clay awarded WB Barto with a Letter of Appreciation for his “Dedication and Outstanding Support” while TDY to Kandahar, Afghanistan. From WB Barto’s airbase protection efforts and analyses to volunteering to provide specimen samples to the Smithsonian Institute and even volunteering to do litter transports for wounded Soldiers and Airmen, WB Barto represented the Program exceptionally well. Congratulations Luke!



During the month of January, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen will be on a month long detail assignment in Ft. Collins, CO acting as Western Region Assistant Regional Director. DS Spencer will act as State Director during SD Jensen’s detail.

## Information and Communication

On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen attended the Bi-State sage-grouse meeting in Bridgeport, CA.

On December 4<sup>th</sup>, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen, District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett, Wildlife Specialist (WS) Derril Fry and Crew Member (CM) Wayne Rowley all attended the N-1 Grazing Board meeting in Elko, Nevada. SD Jensen provided a roll up of the work being done in Nevada and Elko County.

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, SD Jensen attended the Board of Agriculture meeting via video conference.

On December 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, SD Jensen attended the NDOW Commission meeting in Reno, NV.

On December 10<sup>th</sup>, SD Jensen attended the N-2 Grazing Board meeting in Winnemucca, NV.

On December 17<sup>th</sup> thru 19<sup>th</sup>, SD Jensen attended the WS’ Management Team Meeting in Reno, NV. WB Barto also provided a presentation reflecting his TDY experience overseas to the Management Team.

## Emerging Trends/Issues

During the month of December, residents in the Reno and Sparks area reported the loss of six dogs

(valued at \$3,000) all confirmed to have been killed by coyotes. One gentleman had a coyote come in and grab his small terrier and as he chased the coyote with his dog in its mouth, another coyote grabbed his other small dog and ran off with that one. Both attacks were in the Sparks city limits. Coyotes do not always kill pets, sometimes they cause injuries which veterinarians attempt to save through costly operations. Many of the coyotes simply jump over or crawl under fences through small holes. The State Office frequently receives calls about coyotes killing or injuring pets and/or harassing people and pets. Based on the trend of increased calls, it appears more coyotes are settling in



urban and suburban areas than in the past, likely due to human related food sources, effects of drought conditions and the safety afforded them. As shooting and trapping are not allowed in the urban areas, human related coyote mortality generally results from vehicle encounters. WS will continue to promote non-lethal control measures to ease some of the coyote complaints.

During the week of December 9<sup>th</sup>, Staff Biologist (SB) Jack Sengl protected a Tonopah area landfill and local public from raven damage. Despite the application of non-lethal methods, the ravens were defecating on compacting equipment, scattering potential bio-hazards and creating a potential human health and safety issues via fecal material, near workers. To alleviate the problem, SB Sengl conducted a pre-treatment inspection, ensuring that ravens were in proper pre-bait status and non-targets were not in the area. On the following morning, he placed egg baits treated with DRC-1339 for the depredating ravens. A post treatment inspection revealed that the project was successful.

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

Nothing to Report

## Future Meetings and Events

Nothing to Report



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# Wildlife Services



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