

July 2015

# The Trapline

United States Department of  
Agriculture

Animal & Plant Health  
Inspection Service

Wildlife Services



*Cooperating with:*

Nevada

Department of Agriculture

Division of Animal Industry



[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 Industry (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 July, 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 **\$44.2** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$4.5** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **565** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$88,441** in damage and WS Specialists verified **\$24,557** in damage to natural and agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During July, coyotes accounted for **\$9,767** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **79** 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 July, **4** samples were processed.

*The following excerpts are a selection of activities and events of this program which occurred during the month of July, 2015.*

## Resource Protection

### State Office

During the reporting period, the State Office provided non-lethal recommendations to Nevadan's to assist in alleviating their conflicts with wildlife, particularly coyotes and raccoons. For more information about resolving conflicts with wildlife, please go to the following link: <http://agri.nv.gov/Wildlife>. Where wildlife biology and damage management methods are offered by species.

## East District

During the month of June, District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett confirmed the loss of at least 13 lambs and one adult ewe to coyote predation. DS Bennett and Wildlife Specialist (WS) Randy Evans were able to remove one den, but the killing continued. The Ely plane was able to remove two additional coyotes and stopped the damage for several weeks, then, toward the end of June, seven more lambs were confirmed killed by coyotes. Using traps and snares was not an option since the sheep producer had 19 guard dogs around the sheep. On June 26<sup>th</sup>, the sheep left the area to trail to higher country for the summer. Knowing the sheep would return to this location later this summer and the fact that last season when the sheep returned in late summer at least four ewes were confirmed killed by coyotes, DS Bennett set a number of traps and snares near the pastures experiencing the high losses. Over the course of July, DS Bennett was able to remove five coyotes near the kill locations. DS Bennett also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent



future losses, although with 19 guard dogs already at work in addition to the lethal work, there aren't many feasible non lethal approaches that would prevent the situation during a drought year.

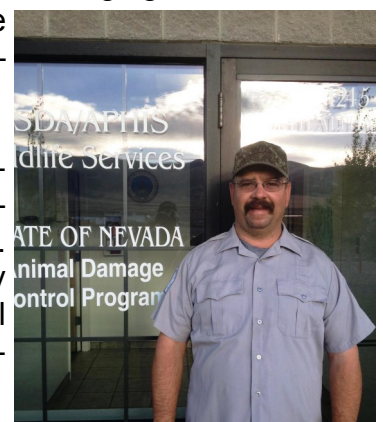
On July 13<sup>th</sup>, WS Randy Evans confirmed the loss of two lambs, valued at \$400, to coyote predation.



The damage occurred on a remote allotment in Eureka County. WS Evans contacted the Ely office and a few mornings later, the plane responded to the location. During the morning's flight, seven coyotes were removed. The plane also located a den that was later removed by WS Evans. No further losses have been reported and WS Evans continues to monitor the sheep in the area. WS Evans also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.

On July 14<sup>th</sup>, the East District office received a call concerning the loss of up to twenty lambs to coyote predation. The damage occurred on a remote allotment in eastern White Pine County. Due to the very remote and rugged terrain, Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler and WS Evans used mules to access the band of sheep. During their investigation, ten lambs were confirmed lost to coyotes and ten more were reported as lost. The total value of the twenty lambs was placed at \$3,000. On July 18<sup>th</sup>, WS Evans was able to call and shoot an adult female coyote, bringing an end to the losses. To date, no additional lambs have been lost. Technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations was provided in an effort to prevent future losses.

On July 20<sup>th</sup>, WS Allen Eldridge was selected and began work as a Nevada Department of Agriculture Field Specialist. The Nevada Wildlife Services program has federal as well as State employees in the workforce. Many employees are supervised by Wildlife Services, but are employed by the Nevada Department of Agriculture. This has been a very beneficial program for livestock producers here in Nevada. We would like to wel-





come Mr. Eldridge to the program!

On July 21<sup>st</sup>, WS Evans received a call concerning the loss of four lambs, valued at \$800, to coyote predation. On July 23<sup>rd</sup>, WS Evans confirmed that the four lambs were indeed killed by coyotes. In response, WS Evans located a family of coyotes on July 28<sup>th</sup> by howling. The adult male coyote was caught up with in the sheep, which WS Evans removed with his firearm. A field necropsy was conducted which yielded lamb in its stomach. With the killing stopped, WS Evans followed up with technical assistance suggestions to reduce future predation incidents.

On July 22<sup>nd</sup>, WS Mac Crome confirmed the loss of one lamb to coyote predation. The loss was valued at \$200 and took place in northern Elko County. WS Crome used his well-trained coyote decoy dogs to call and shoot two coyotes near the kill site. No further losses have been reported. Losses in WS Crome's assigned work area have been lower than normal years and are a testament to his hard work and dedication to helping Nevada livestock producers.



On July 24<sup>th</sup>, the East district office received a call concerning the loss of six lambs, valued at \$1,200. The damage occurred in central White Pine County. WS Billy Taylor and WS Eldridge responded to the remote band of sheep. Due to the lack of roads, WS Taylor and WS Eldridge hiked into the sheep and confirmed the losses. Both specialists were able to call and shoot a large adult male coyote. A necropsy of the coyote revealed it had recently consumed a large amount of lamb. No further losses have been reported and WS Eldridge continues to monitor the sheep for future losses.

On July 27<sup>th</sup>, DS Bennett conducted a two day field inspection with WS Scott MacDonald in northern White Pine County. During the inspection, ATV's were used to access several bands of sheep in the high country. One sheep herder reported a problem with a lion and MLS Buhler was contacted to handle the issue.

On July 27<sup>th</sup>, the East District Office received a call concerning a problem with ravens. The rancher reported that several ravens attacked and killed two newborn calves. The loss was valued at \$2,000. On July 29<sup>th</sup>, DS Bennett traveled to the remote ranch in northern Lincoln County and confirmed the loss of the two calves. DS Bennett used hard boiled chicken eggs treated with DRC-1339 to remove the ravens near the kill sites. No further losses have been reported. DS Bennett also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.

On July 30<sup>th</sup>, MLS Buhler received a call concerning the loss of three lambs, loss valued at \$540, to lion predation in the high country of central White Pine County. In response to the reported losses, MLS Buhler arrived at the kill location on July 31<sup>st</sup> and confirmed that a lion was responsible for the damage. To end the losses, MLS Buhler set six well-trained hounds on the track that the lion had



left while eating the sheep. As the hounds trailed the lion, MLS Buhler followed, confirming an additional two lambs, valued at \$360, killed by the lion. Ultimately, the hounds treed the lion, which was promptly dispatched, sampled, skinned, necropsied and turned into the Ely Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) office. The necropsy of the 125 pound tom yielded lamb in its stomach. In the hopes of reducing future damage to the resource, MLS Buhler provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations, although several, such as guard dogs and benching were already being utilized by the sheep producer.

## West District

During the month of July, WS Ben Miller was out placing and checking trail snares in northern Washoe County (hunt units 011-013) for the protection of translocated California bighorn sheep. WS Miller has been working closely with a sheep biologist to concentrate protection efforts around bighorn sheep herds and bighorn sheep water holes from data observed from tracking collars. WS Miller has been utilizing a call box, in addition to his custom made trail snares to capture lions inhabiting the same areas as this limited population of bighorn sheep. Many of these locations are far from roads, so WS Miller must backpack supplies in, which can make for long walks and longer days. On July 17<sup>th</sup>, WS Miller trail snared one male and one female lion. This was the fifth lion WS Miller has removed in the past six weeks around the bighorn sheep. Both lions were living right in with the bighorn sheep. WS Miller also found evidence of another lion that has been watering on a big game guzzler. Water improvements built for bighorn sheep are frequently used by lions not only for a drink but also a place to get a quick easy bighorn sheep meal. WS Miller will continue to apply his expertise to protect these valuable bighorn sheep populations.



On July 2<sup>nd</sup>, well before daylight, DS Jack Spencer was contacted by a large joint use public airport and military airport in Reno about problem raccoons. One raccoon was trying to climb inside an aircraft while several other raccoons at another location had taken up residence near a building entrance. DS Spencer hand-caught two raccoons at the military facility, then hand caught a third raccoon near the building entrance. The fourth raccoon crawled inside a large tug and out of arm's reach. Because the raccoon was near the runway, DS Spencer had the operator drive the tug (with the raccoon somewhere inside) off the airport property, so if the problem raccoon ran out it wouldn't cause any problems for aircraft. Later in the afternoon, the raccoon still hadn't left the vehicle, so DS Spencer managed to pull it out of the motor so that the ground handlers could use their tug again. The recent heavy rains in the Reno area have flooded the storm water drain systems, forcing the raccoons to dwell elsewhere.

WS John Peter recently reached a milestone in his trapping career as he reached 30 years of federal service as a government trapper. WS Peter said he has mules and horses that will last another 10 years, so he figures he will continue to protect his many livestock producers in northern Nevada. WS Peter is one of the most respected trappers in the Wildlife Services' program.



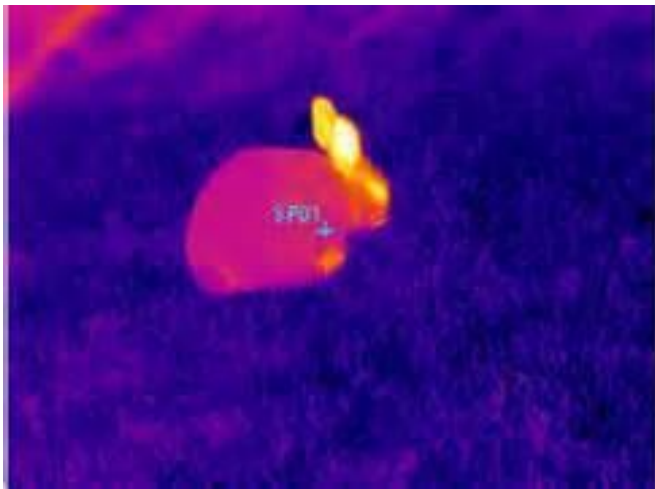


During the month of July, WS Doug Koepke was busy protecting livestock producers in Churchill County. During the summer months when the open range livestock protection work slows down, WS Koepke stays busy with calls from smaller ranches in the Churchill County area. WS Koepke runs M-44s, leghold traps and trail snares to help protect his many livestock producers.

During the month of July, 11 pet dogs were killed by coyotes in the Reno/Sparks area. Likely a fraction of pets killed in the Reno/Sparks as many pet deaths go unreported or are reported to other agencies. The WS' state office provided technical assistance to pet owners about coyotes. Each year, WS receives urban coyote and other nuisance animal/wildlife calls and it becomes very time consuming.

WS George Hansen was working several sheep bands during the month of July in Lander County. WS Hansen has reported very few livestock losses, a true testament to his hard work and excellent trapping skills. WS Hansen will continue to protect livestock in his large work area.

On July 31<sup>st</sup>, NDOW managers requested assistance from WS on an ongoing public safety call regarding coyotes attacking/biting people in Storey County. Both NDOW law enforcement and local police had been responding to the escalating coyote calls and all agreed that coyote removal was



much needed to curb the recent attacks as the coyotes had become habituated to humans and considered them food providers. Later that evening, DS Spencer and Wildlife Biologist (WB) Hunter Moyles worked with local law enforcement to safely remove the habituated coyotes, which kept the coalition working till 3:00 am. DS Spencer and WB Moyles employed the use of suppressed firearms and thermal imaging during the nighttime operation which resulted in the removal of six aggressive coyotes. Calling and shooting in urban areas at night takes a lot of planning and is best done at night, with the proper technology (such as flir (left) and/or night vision devices which ensure safety and effectiveness) when there

are fewer people around. Calling in urban environments is a challenge because often time's people hear the prey distress sounds emitted by the person calling and come to see what is going on. To date, no further people have been attacked and no additional coyote calls have been reported. During the previous reporting period, DS Spencer had explained to the local public that they needed to change their practices or this would be a needless recurring theme.

During the month of July, WB Zack Bowers continued to deter wildlife from using/crossing the airfield at a military installation in northern Nevada. In an effort to keep these species from crossing the airfield, WB Bowers has utilized harassment with several methods. WB Bowers dispersed 38 birds from on and near the airfield. This is down considerably from the previous few months. Wildlife dispersed from the airfield included eight species. The most common and abundant species dispersed include turkey vultures, great egrets and black-crowned night herons. The herons and egrets are congregated around two drainage ditches which hold water year round. Despite receiving decent levels of precipitation this spring, the area has been in drought conditions for several years now and wildlife is concentrated around water sources. Persistent harassment is necessary in this situation as birds and other wildlife are reluctant to leave this water source. WB Bowers continues to monitor

the airfield and surrounding area using formal surveys and general observations.

In an effort to reduce the attractiveness of the airfield to predatory wildlife such as coyotes and red-tailed hawks, WB Bowers removed 19 black-tailed jackrabbits from the airfield. In addition one coyote was also removed from the airfield. Along with predatory wildlife being a concern, scavengers have also been prevalent around the airfield as well. The primary scavenger of concern is the turkey vulture. The turkey vultures are no longer loafing or roosting on base property. However, they are still observed flying near the airfield. In an effort to reduce the attractiveness of the area to turkey vultures, WB Bowers has been removing road kill on a daily basis. Road kill has been common lately but is finally starting to taper off.



During the month of July, WB Moyles initiated protection work on a major international airport in Reno. During the month, WB Moyles continued to deter wildlife from using/crossing the airfield property. In an effort to deter these avian/mammalian species from crossing the airfield, WB Moyles utilized several methods of harassment. WB Moyles dispersed 23 birds in total from the airfield. Wildlife dispersed from the airfield included five species of birds. Many of these birds were congregated around a drainage ditch which holds water on a year around basis. Despite receiving decent levels of precipitation this spring, the area has been in drought conditions for the past several years now and wildlife is concentrated around water sources. Persistent harassment is necessary as birds and other wildlife are reluctant to leave the water source located on airport property. WB Moyles will start to monitor the airfield and surrounding area using formal structured surveys and general observations.



On July 17<sup>th</sup>, WB Moyles was contacted by a military facility located in Reno to address a report of a duck and nest spotted near the aircraft launch pad. WB Moyles responded to the call and was able to hand capture the hen mallard and remove the nest without disrupting air service.

On July 23<sup>rd</sup>, WB Moyles was on his daily route checking the perimeter fence, and traps at a large airport in Reno, when he spotted a lone coyote sitting on the edge of a large runway. WB Moyles contacted the airport operations personnel to inform them of the problem animal. WB Moyles, accompanied by airport operations personnel, was able to remove the offending coyote before it crossed the runway.

On July 30<sup>th</sup>, Airport officials contacted WB Moyles to report a domestic dog was running down the airfield. WB Moyles, along with the Airport Police and other Airport Operations personnel, managed to corner the dog and capture it in a non-lethal manner. The dog was then transferred to the Nevada State Humane Society where it will find a new home which won't be so hazardous to the animal's health and to the many travelers at the airport.

Along with several non-lethal harassment techniques, WB Moyles also had to deploy some lethal means of control to eliminate aircraft strike potential at a large airport in Reno. During the month,

WB Moyles removed several offending species for public safety including: three coyotes, two crows, two pigeons, five raccoons, one skunk and 102 ground squirrels by utilizing trapping, shooting and chemical application. Aircraft protection methodology will continue to be employed at the large airport to better minimize the potential for animal and bird strikes to aircraft. WB Moyles has been working six days a week lately to help catch up protection efforts, since this airport position has been vacant for the past several months. Protection efforts are ongoing.

## **New and Developing Methods**

Nothing to Report

## **Valuing and Investing in Employees**

Nothing to Report

## **Information and Communication**

On July 15<sup>th</sup>, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen and Staff Biologist (SB) Jack Sengl attended the East District annual meeting held by DS Bennett. The district meetings allow for all the required State and federal trainings to be completed at one location, including: annual firearms refresher training, pesticide training, and safety training. These meetings also provide an opportunity for face-time and information sharing which is important for morale and effectiveness. Several awards were handed out including East District Specialist of the year, which went to WS Mac Crome. Three other Wildlife Specialists were awarded extra effort awards including (from left to right): WS Scott Little, WS Evans, and Crew Member (CM) Jerred Taylor, for their hard work and dedication to the Nevada Wildlife Services program.



On July 20<sup>th</sup>, SD Jensen attended the WAFWA Conference in Reno, NV.



The West District held its annual meeting on July 21-22 in Reno. During the meeting, employees received firearm training and other required WS training. WS Peter (left) was awarded the West District's "Most Valuable Trapper" award and Instructor Pilot Wes Gossard (right) received a Certificate of Merit for becoming an Instructor Pilot and the following detailed work assignments from the WS' aviation center.



## **Emerging Trends/Issues**

Nothing to Report

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

Nothing to Report

## **Future Meetings and Events**

Nevada Trapper's Association Rendezvous August 1<sup>st</sup>, SB Sengl to attend.



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# Wildlife Services

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