

March 2014

The Trapline

United States Department of
Agriculture

Animal & Plant Health
Inspection Service

Wildlife Services



Cooperating with:

Nevada

Department of Agriculture

Division of Animal Industries



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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 March, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **8.0** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$147.9** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$7.1** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **41** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$13,533** in damage and WS Specialists verified **\$29,245** in damage to other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During March, coyotes accounted for **\$20,174** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **378** 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 March, **4** samples were processed.

The following excerpts are a selection of activities and events of this program which occurred during the month of March, 2014.

Resource Protection

State Office

The State Office cage trap loaning program has been suspended. Those in need of a cage trap will be directed to their local private pest control company. Information and technical assistance to assist Nevadans with alleviation of damage will still be provided, as well as response to imminent threats to human health and safety.

East District



During the first part of March, Wildlife Specialist (WS) Derril Fry received a call concerning a problem with a badger near Jiggs, Nevada. The badger had caused substantial damage to an alfalfa field by burrowing and digging. WS Fry utilized a snare to remove the offending badger. To date, no further damage has occurred. WS Fry also provided technical assistance in an effort to prevent future badger problems. The rancher has been very pleased with the assistance he has received from WS Fry and Wildlife Services.

On March 3rd, WS Matt Spires confirmed the loss of four ewe sheep and the injury of another to attacks from coyotes. The total value of the damage was placed at \$1,000. WS Spires utilized calling and snares to remove two adult coyotes near the site of the damage. WS Spires also requested the assistance of the Ely plane. The plane was able to remove at least three more coyotes from the immediate area. The combined efforts of WS Spires and the Ely plane brought an end to the damage. Technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations was also provided in an effort to prevent future losses. No further losses have been reported.



On March 10th, WS Scott MacDonald confirmed the loss of one adult ewe sheep to coyote predation. The damage occurred in Lincoln County and the value of the sheep was placed at \$250. WS MacDonald utilized traps to remove the offending coyote. WS MacDonald also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses. No further losses have been reported and WS MacDonald continues to monitor the sheep in his assigned work area.



On March 14th, a rancher in Lander County called the East District office concerning a very serious coyote problem. The rancher said that coyotes had killed at least three of his lambs, one calf and had attacked a young heifer while she was calving and had caused so much damage that she had to be put down. The total value of the losses was placed at \$3,750. On March 20th, the Ely plane responded to the location. During the morning's flight, the plane was able to remove several coyotes near the site of the kills. The rancher was very pleased with the assistance he received from Wildlife Services. To date, no further losses have been reported.

On March 19th, WS Scott Little received a call concerning the loss of two calves valued at \$1,600. The damage occurred on a ranch in Nye County. WS Little traveled to the location and confirmed that coyotes had killed the calves. WS Little placed several traps and snares near the kills. WS Little also called for the assistance of the Ely plane. The plane responded to the location and was able to locate and remove one large coyote near the kills. WS Little continues to monitor the area but to date, no further losses have occurred. WS Little provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal



recommendations to help prevent future problems.

On March 21st, the East District Office received a call concerning the loss of one calf to coyote predation. The predation occurred in a remote location in Lincoln County. The value of the calf was placed at \$750. On March 24th, the Ely plane responded to the location. During the morning's operation the plane was able to remove five coyotes near the kill, bringing an end to the damage. The rancher was very pleased with the rapid response to her call for assistance. No further damage has been reported.

Most of the East District field employees are preparing for the busy upcoming lambing season. Several have started moving their field camps to the lambing grounds in an effort to start protection efforts early. Lambing will start in just a few short weeks in Eastern Nevada.

During March, work began in the East District on two large power companies removing ravens. The ravens had caused substantial power outages in at least three eastern Nevada Counties: more than \$107,600 in structural damage plus the associated lost revenue. Power outages to consumers also pose a serious public safety threat concerning people that rely on oxygen machines and other medical devices that require power. Irrigating fields this time of year also requires dependable power. Ravens build nests on the power poles that in turn arc and cause fires and power outages (note nesting material and fire on transformer). Despite the expenditure of over \$500,000 in non-lethal attempts to control the raven damage: perch deterrents, anti-electrocution cover-ups, fire fly, etc., the damage has continued.



West District

On March 4th through March 6th, WS John Peter was busy placing M-44s around a lambing ground in Humboldt County. During the week, District Supervisor (DS) Jack Spencer was also conducting a field inspection with WS Peter, so DS Spencer was put to work setting M-44s and trail snares alongside WS Peter. DS Spencer also met with several ranchers including the owner of a large sheep operation. This is WS Peter's 29th spring protecting sheep in Humboldt County. Protection efforts are ongoing.



During the month of March, WS Peter was contacted by several cattle ranchers in Humboldt County. One rancher called and reported two calves (valued at \$1,600) were killed by coyotes. WS Peter has been continually placing M-44s around calving grounds in Humboldt County which resulted in the removal of 33 coyotes. The weather has not been conducive for aerial work, so ground equipment has really helped alleviate further livestock damage. In the spring

months, weeks may go by without a decent day to fly aircraft because of high winds. WS Peter will continue to address protection efforts for the dozens of cow-calf operators currently requesting assistance.

On March 11th, DS Spencer conducted a bird removal project at a feedlot in Lyon County. The feed-

lot operator reported \$58,000 lost during the past year by thousands of nonnative starlings alone. DS Spencer worked with the livestock producers to pre-bait the offending starlings, pigeons and ravens for nearly a week for bait acceptance. The project successfully stopped the damage and the livestock cooperater was very pleased with the assistance. Protection efforts are ongoing.



On March 13th, Pilot Wes Gossard and Crew Member (CM) Brandon VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around a sheep producer in Lyon County that has experienced historic losses. The air crew flew around the newborn lambs removing seven coyotes. WS Smith provided ground support during aerial operations and will continue to provide protection efforts on the lambing grounds. The sheep producer was pleased with the protection efforts.



On March 7th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation in Humboldt County around two calving areas that had some prior coyote problems. Because of the logistics, both WS George Hansen and WS Doug Koepke

provided ground support. The effort resulted in the removal of seven coyotes. The cattle producers were pleased with the protection efforts.



On Saturday, March 8th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation in Humboldt County around several calving areas. WS Peter provided ground support for the effort. The effort resulted in the removal of 19 coyotes. The ranchers later reported that no more coyotes were observed around the calving areas. Protection efforts are ongoing.

On March 14th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around a lambing ground in Humboldt County. During the flight, five coyotes were removed. WS Peter provided ground support during the operation. Protection efforts are ongoing.

On March 18th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an aerial operation around several lambing areas in Washoe County. During the flight, two coyotes were removed. WS Koepke provided ground support the operation. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

On March 24th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an aerial operation around six lamb bands in Lyon County. The rancher reported that five lambs (valued at \$625) had been killed by coyotes. During the flight, the air crew removed



four coyotes and WS Smith trapped an additional coyote right next to the lambs that had been killed. Protection efforts will be ongoing as coyotes are drawn to the arrival of thousands of vulnerable lambs.

During the week of March 17th through March 20th, DS Spencer was invited to attend the Idaho Wildlife Services State Conference. On March 19th, DS Spencer provided a Power Point presentation on the process of preparing and placing DRC-1339 treated egg baits to remove offending ravens near sage-grouse nests. The threat of the sage grouse being listed as a threatened or endangered species is a huge concern for the farming and ranching communities in 11 western states.

On March 25th, WS Hansen conducted a raven removal project in Lander County. The cattle rancher has had problems with ravens injuring newborn calves. WS Hansen placed out DRC-1339 treated egg baits and removed the offending ravens. To date, no other raven damage has been reported.

During the month of March, WS Ben Miller and DS Spencer were placing DRC-1339 treated egg baits to remove offending ravens from the Virginia Mountains of Washoe County to protect sage-grouse nests. A recent publication by USGS on this study site indicates very low sage-grouse nesting success with, not to surprisingly, the common raven cited as the main culprit in sage grouse nest destruction. WS Miller and DS Spencer will continue to protect sage grouse nests and to a lesser extent, juvenile sage-grouse chicks till the end of May.



During the past month, residents from Washoe and Clark Counties reported that 14 pets (valued at \$7,000) were killed by coyotes. The depredated pets were located in urban and suburban environments. Because there is no shooting or trapping allowed by the public in these areas, coyotes are not discouraged from killing and eating pets. Non-lethal methods were expressed to residents; unfortunately, the pets are dead none the less.

On March 30th, a sheep producer from Washoe County reported that three lambs (valued at \$300) had been killed by coyotes. On March 31st, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around the site of the depredated lambs. Immediately the aerial crew located three coyotes, which they promptly removed. The aerial crew flew around the rest of the lambing area and did not see any other coyotes. WS Koepke provided ground support during aerial operations. Protection efforts are ongoing.



Wildlife Specialists in the West District have been using call boxes out in the field to deter coyotes from lambing areas lately. Last year, call boxes were placed with scare sounds (gunfire, horns, tire screeching etc.) instead of the usual calling sounds (prey animals in distress) and it worked very well. In fact, several ranchers have requested its use again. The call box with scare sounds can be turned up to a high volume and programmed to play various times throughout the hour and either day or night time.

During the month of March, Wildlife Biologist (WB) Zack Bowers continued to deter wildlife from us-

ing/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 harassed seven species of birds from on and around the airfield including red-tailed hawks, great blue herons and mallards.

Black-tail jackrabbits attract red-tailed hawks, coyotes and other predator species to the airfield. Both coyotes and red-tailed hawks have been involved in strikes at the above mentioned airfield. Red-tailed hawks have been in the nest location/preparation phase as of late and WB Bowers is trying to reduce the attractiveness of the airfield by reducing their main prey base. As a result, WB Bowers lethally removed forty black-tailed jackrabbits from on and around the airfield. Last year WB Bowers confirmed six nesting pairs of red-tailed hawks on base property and two additional nesting pairs of raptors believed to have been red-tailed hawks. These large raptors were often observed circling at the approach and take-off ends of the airfield in an effort to locate and catch the black-tailed jackrabbits. This behavior puts the red-tailed hawks in conflicted airspace with aircraft for extended periods of time. WB Bowers will continue to try to reduce the attractiveness of the airfield to species of bird animal strike hazard (BASH) concern.



Throughout the month of March, WB Luke Barto removed five horned larks, two yellow-bellied marmots, 15 rock doves (feral pigeons), four European starlings, two California ground-squirrels, one mallard duck, one killdeer, one red-tail hawk and one raccoon from a local airport. Large birds of prey, such as red-tail hawks, can be a wildlife strike hazard to in/outbound air traffic on/around airports. It is a common behavior for many birds of prey to circle or tower over open spaces in search for prey animals. This towering behavior in conjunction with their large size and dense body structure make them a greater risk to aircraft. For this purpose, birds of prey that are captured on airport property are translocated a certain distance and direction

away from the airfield, to areas where they are not at hazard to aircraft.

Three bird strikes were reported at the above mentioned airport for the month of March. All three birds involved belonged to the family Columbidae (pigeons and doves). Feral pigeons (also known as rock doves) are considered invasive species within the United States, and in many cases considered a nuisance. Removal of pigeons at airports is beneficial, not only for the safety of air traffic but in many cases for sanitary reasons.

Non-lethal methods of dispersal including pyrotechnics were also utilized to reduce the hazards found on/around the airfield. A total of 350 ducks and 59 geese were dispersed from airport property to reduce wildlife threats to aviation throughout March.

Continued surveillance is part of an integrated approach to wildlife management and a good way to track wildlife movements. Two point count surveys, two off-site surveys and one night survey was conducted during the month of March at the above mentioned airport. A total of 27 species were identified between the two survey methods.

New and Developing Methods

Nothing to Report

Valuing and Investing in Employees

Nothing to Report

Information and Communication

During the first week of March, Staff Biologist (SB) Jack Sengl responded to a Nye County landfill incident where common ravens and European starlings were defecating upon landfill equipment and scattering debris before the landfill equipment could compact and bury the material. In addition, both bird species were defecating on equipment rails, creating a threat to the worker's health between slip hazards and various diseases known to occur in the bird feces. After observing the birds and local conditions during a pre-treatment inspection, two different label formulations of DRC-1339 were used to target each depredating species, specific to the resource and situation. Post treatment inspection revealed that both treatment projects were successful. Non-lethal recommendations were also provided to the landfill to assist in reducing the effect of the ravens and starlings.



On March 4th, 2014, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen attended the Nevada Board of Agriculture Meeting in Reno.

On March 6th, 2014, SD Jensen and DS Spencer attended the N-3 Grazing Board Meeting in Fallon.

Emerging Trends/Issues

Nothing to Report

Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights (EEO/CR)

Nothing to Report

Future Meetings and Events

April 8, 2014, Sagebrush Ecosystem Council (SEC) Meeting, SD Jensen to attend.

April 9, 2014, Predator Animal and Rodent Committee (PARC) Meeting, SD Jensen to attend.



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