

May 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



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 May, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **3.2** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$64.7** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$1** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **88** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$83,767** in damage and WS Specialists verified **\$99,666** in damage to utilities and other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During May, coyotes accounted for **\$12,808** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **137** 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 May, **no** samples were processed.

The following excerpts are a selection of activities and events of this program which occurred during the month of May, 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 last week of April, a large mine in Elko County contacted the Elko Wildlife Services Office concerning a problem with ravens. The mine reported that ravens had caused at least \$10,000 damage and were posing a public safety issue on the mine by nesting and defecating on the machinery. The mine utilizes a number of non-lethal methods in an attempt to stop the damage but only had very limited success with these attempts. Crew Member (CM) Wayne Rowley traveled to the location and confirmed the damage. On April 30th, CM Rowley returned to the mine and used hard boiled chicken eggs treated with DRC-1339 to remove the offending ravens. CM Rowley also provided more technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations in an attempt to help prevent future problems.

On May 5th, a sheep producer in White Pine County contacted the East District office concerning a problem with ravens. The rancher reported that about 40-50 ravens were attacking his newborn lambs and had killed at least eight lambs by pecking their eyes out just after they were born. The value of the lambs was placed at \$1,200. The rancher witnessed several of the attacks. The rancher had already tried several non-lethal tactics in an attempt to stop the damage but nothing he tried worked. On May 6th, District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett responded to the location and confirmed the damage. At least 50 ravens were observed harassing the lambs in several different pastures. DS Bennett utilized hard boiled chicken eggs treated with DRC-1339 to remove the ravens. No further losses have been reported and the rancher was very pleased with the prompt response by Wildlife Services. He commented that without the help he no doubt would have lost many more of his lambs. DS Bennett also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations in an attempt to prevent future losses.



On May 7th, a homeowner in Elko County contacted the Elko Wildlife Services Office concerning a problem with a porcupine. The porcupine was posing a threat to both the home owner and her pets and despite several attempts, the animal would not leave. CM Rowley traveled to the home and utilized a cage trap to remove the large porcupine from the residence. CM Rowley also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future issues. No further problems have been reported and the home owner was very pleased with the quick response provided by Wildlife Services and CM Rowley.

On May 9th, Wildlife Specialist (WS) Scott Little confirmed the loss of two lambs valued at \$300 to raven predation. WS Little observed about a dozen ravens harassing the newborn lambs. On May 11th, WS Little utilized eggs treated with DRC-1339 to remove the offending ravens. No further losses have been reported. WS Little also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations in an effort to help prevent future problems.



On May 12th, WS Matt Spires was checking on bands of sheep in his area when he observed a bobcat leaving one of his lambing grounds. WS Spires investigated and found two lambs that had just been killed and covered by the bobcat. Although somewhat rare, bobcats do prey on livestock. The value of the two lambs was placed at \$300. WS Spires set leg hold traps

near the kills. On May 14th, WS Spires trapped the offending bobcat. The large male bobcat was skinned and turned into the Ely Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) Office. No further losses have been reported.

On May 14th, a person contacted the East District Office concerning a problem with a striped skunk and a red fox. The caller reported owning a set of horse corrals with chickens in White Pine County and was having chickens killed by a red fox. They also reported a skunk odor issue and eggs were being depredated. WS Randy Evans responded to



the location and confirmed the loss of at least fifteen chickens valued at more than \$300. WS Evans set two cage traps, one for



the red fox and one for the skunk. A few days later WS Evans captured the skunk but still was unable to catch the fox. Finally WS Evans was able to call in and shoot the adult male red fox bringing an end to all the problems. The caller was very happy with all the hard work by WS Evans. No further problems have been reported and WS Evans did provide technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future wildlife problems.

On May 14th, WS Scott MacDonald confirmed the loss of three lambs valued at \$450 to coyote predation. The damage occurred in northern White Pine County near the Elko County line. WS MacDonald used traps to remove three coyotes near the kill sites. WS MacDonald also requested the Ely plane. The Ely plane responded to the location and was able to remove an additional five coyotes, including two at the kill sites. No further losses have been reported and WS MacDonald continues to monitor the livestock in his assigned work area.



During the month of May, WS Derril Fry confirmed the loss of seven lambs valued at \$1,050, to coyote predation. With the use of his well-trained coyote decoy dogs, WS Fry was able to remove six adult coyotes and two coyote dens, bringing an end to the damage. WS Fry also called upon both the Elko and Ely airplanes, which removed another four coyotes and assisted with locating one den. WS Fry's cooperators were very

happy with his hard work and diligence. WS Fry will continue to monitor the many bands of ewes and newborn lambs in his assigned work area.

On May 29th, CM Rowley and WS Mac Crome confirmed the loss of three lambs valued at \$450 to coyote predation. The damage occurred on a remote ranch in central Elko County. The two Wildlife Services employees were able to remove an active coyote den near the sheep, bringing an end to the damage. CM Rowley will continue to monitor the sheep for future losses.

WS Little had no reported losses during the month of May. WS Little's cooperators in his assigned work area are very pleased with his hard work and dedication which paid off with zero losses during the first month of lambing.

During the month of May, WS Dayne Barnes was busy documenting pig populations in Nevada and northern Arizona. WS Barnes is using trail cameras and riding into remote locations on his mule in an effort to assess the feral pig population in Nevada. Although the pig population is low in Nevada, three locations have been identified with small pig populations. Associative work will continue in the coming months.

WS Billy Taylor finished working the sage-grouse nest/egg protection project for NDOW. WS Taylor has spent the past few months removing ravens, coyotes and badgers in an effort to protect sage-grouse nests in Eastern Nevada. The project took place in Elko, White Pine and Lincoln Counties.

During the last two weeks of May, a sheep producer lost at least fourteen lambs valued at \$2,100 to coyote predation. On numerous occasions, the Ely plane responded to the location but could not locate any coyotes. In his spare time the Ely Crew Member set several traps near the kills. WS Scott Little also assisted and used his coyote decoy dogs. The Ely Crew Member was able to trap a large male coyote and WS Little was able to call and shoot another large male bringing the damage to an end. No further losses have been reported.



West District

On May 1st, Pilot Wes Gossard and CM Brandon VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several lamb bands in Washoe County to reduce coyote related losses. During the flight, seven coyotes were removed including several right in amongst the sheep. Because this area was close to the California border, WS George Affonso assisted WS Doug Koepke with valuable ground support during aerial operations. Protection efforts will be ongoing.



On May 1st, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay flew around four lamb bands at a different location in Washoe County to assist WS Koepke with reducing lamb loss to coyotes. During the flight the aerial crew removed one coyote and located two coyote dens for WS Koepke to inspect at a later time. Protection efforts are ongoing.

On May 8th, a livestock producer from Washoe County reported that a lion had killed eight lambs (valued at \$1,600). WS Koepke immediately placed trail snares near the lamb carcasses that evening. The lion had previously killed 31 lambs in a few weeks' time; however, the lion moved across the California state line and therefore couldn't be pursued by WS Koepke because in 1990, under California proposition 117, mountain lions became legally classified as a Specially Protected Species. The lion returned, so on May 9th, WS Koepke removed it with a trail snare. No further livestock losses have been reported and the sheep producer was very pleased with WS Koepke's efforts and results.



On May 12th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around five lamb bands in Lyon County. During the flight, two coyotes were removed and the aerial crew located one coyote den for WS Nick Smith to inspect. Very few livestock kills have been reported for these lamb bands and WS Smith will continue to protect these sheep and request aerial assistance when the plane is available.

On May 11th, a sheep producer from Pershing County reported that three lambs (valued at \$450) had been killed by coyotes. The area was remote, so aerial work was about the only method to protect these lamb bands with no trapper in the immediate area.



On May 13th, the aerial crew inspected the area where the lambs had been killed and located a pair of coyotes on a den. As the aerial crew was making a pass they observed another coyote den with a pair of coyotes on it also. The two coyote den sites were only 250 yards apart. While coyotes are typically territorial and aggressive towards other coyotes in their area during the pup rearing season, once in a while the aerial crews find these types of situations where coyotes den very close to one another. WS Koepke provided ground support and removed one additional coyote near the sheep by method of shooting.

On May 14th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several lamb bands in Lander County that typically experiences losses in May. During the long flight, no coyotes were observed. Though it makes for an uneventful flight for the aerial crew, it is relieving to see no coyotes in or around young lambs. WS George Hansen provided ground support.

On May 19th, several lamb bands in Humboldt County were flown by Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay. During the flight two coyotes were removed. The aerial removed the pair of coyotes as they fed upon a freshly killed lamb (valued at \$120). WS John Peter provided ground support during aerial operations. Protection efforts are ongoing.

On May 22nd, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around two remote large sheep producers in Washoe County. The aerial crew flew around each lamb band methodically and over the herders, but no herders indicated problems (if coyotes were killing, the herders jump up and down and point to the direction they have heard coyotes). The aerial crew didn't find any coyotes, but every year about this same time, coyotes almost completely stop eating lambs and move into antelope and mule deer fawning grounds. The aerial crew has been leaving the hanger before 5:00 am to make sure they are at the lamb bands at first light. WS Koepke provided valuable ground support.

On May 22nd, a Reno resident reported that when he opened up the back door to let his dog out, a large lion jumped from the side of the door, grabbed the small dog and ran off with it into the brush. The following day another neighbor reported a large lion looking in the sliding glass door at their pet dog.



Other neighbors have been seeing several lions in the neighborhood packing off small pets and just casually walking through yards at all hours. A local NDOW Warden contacted DS Jack Spencer and requested if the lion(s) return to the urban area they are to be removed promptly. Of interest, on May 21st, a lion was spotted by mall security personnel at a shopping mall in Reno (aired on local television networks). Hopefully the public watched the media coverage and received the take home point that you must

always exhibit situational awareness and never leave the opportunity for a predator to take your pet from you, particularly when in a drought phase that has spanned several years. Regardless of the predator species, it's crucial that you illuminate your backyard when it is dark and verify that you are not putting your pet in a hazardous situation before letting your pet out. Porch lights, motion detector lights and landscaping lights are an excellent early warning detection system. When utilizing these tools, it is important to ensure that you have the light direction set to warn you of the presence of a predator, not the other way around.

On May 24th, a livestock producer from Lyon County reported that a black bear had killed two calves (valued at \$1,500). WS Smith inspected the situation and confirmed that a large male black bear was responsible for the calves' death. WS Smith placed foot snares in the immediate area and the following Sunday morning removed the offending black bear. Area residents also reported that the bear was breaking into houses and causing a lot of damage to structures. To date, no further livestock losses have been reported and the livestock producer was pleased with the protection efforts. WS Smith will continue to address bear complaints and work closely with NDOW when addressing black bear complaints.



On May 28th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning follow up flight around two lamb bands in Lander County that had previously had issues with coyotes. During the flight, two coyotes were removed. The aerial crew also found one coyote den. DS Spencer provided communications during aerial hunting activities. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

During the month of May, WS Ben Miller and DS Spencer placed treated egg baits in the Virginia Mountains sage-grouse nest/egg protection project in Washoe County. Raven removal efforts have proven quite effective at reducing raven presence around nesting sage-grouse. DRC-1339 treated eggs were placed out twice a week because of the hot temperatures to ensure ravens had edible eggs to consume and would not receive sub lethal doses. Eggs dry out in the heat which can cause bait aversion and reduce the viability of the avicide. Additionally, the avicide begins to degrade when exposed to ultraviolet rays from the sun. During the last week of protection efforts only four ravens were seen in the project area by both Wildlife Services personnel and United States Geological Survey (USGS) researchers. Almost all of the sage-grouse eggs have hatched (the last collared hen's nest hatched out June 2nd), although official nesting success will not likely be published for several years, preliminary sage-grouse nesting success looks very promising.

During the month of May, Wildlife Biologist (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 harassed eleven 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 nesting around the airfield and WB Bowers is trying to reduce the attractiveness of the airfield by reducing their main prey base. To that end, WB Bowers lethally removed twenty nine black-tailed jackrabbits from on and around the airfield. WB Bowers has confirmed several nesting pairs of red-tailed hawks on base property. These large raptors are 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. In addition to removing the black-tailed jackrabbits, WB Bowers dis-

persed thirteen red-tailed hawks from on and near the airfield. Despite all this effort to minimize risk, there was a damaging strike involving a red-tailed hawk during the month of May. It is clear that more needs to be done, and WB Bowers is hopeful that more of the recommendations made in the wildlife hazard assessment (WHA) will be taken. WB Bowers has recommended removal of dead trees on and around the airfield which act as roosting, perching, and nesting locations. WB Bowers has also recommended trapping/translocation of problem individuals that don't respond well to harassment. Even with great effort put forward, it's hard to be successful when not working with a full tool box in your integrated wildlife damage management plan.

Throughout the month of May, WB Luke Barto continued protection efforts at a local international airport removing: 11 rock doves (feral pigeons), seven European starlings, 230 California ground-squirrels, three killdeer and four yellow bellied marmots in an effort to reduce bird and aircraft collisions.

No bird strikes were reported at the above mentioned airport for the month of May. Non-lethal methods of dispersal using pyrotechnics were also utilized to reduce the hazards found on/around the airfield. A total of 33 ducks, three black crowned-night herons and six Canada geese were dispersed from airport property to reduce wildlife threats to aviation throughout May. Additionally, 380 California gulls were dispersed at an offsite location in order to deter nesting. Nesting gulls have been observed in previous years crossing runways between nesting and feeding locations. Deterring gulls from nesting at the above mention offsite location encourages them to seek out alternative locations that do not allow the gulls to fly over active runways in transit between nesting and feeding locations.

Two point count surveys and two off-site surveys were conducted during the month of May at the above mentioned airport to detect and monitor wildlife activity on and near the airport.

New and Developing Methods

WS Miller and DS Spencer have experimented with coupling the visual attraction of a raven decoy to the audial attractant of raven calls broadcast from a call box that is typically utilized in livestock and other wildlife protection efforts. The call box and raven decoy were set a short distance away from treated eggs in hopes to lure sage-grouse nest raiding ravens to the treated egg baits and away from known (collared) sage-grouse nests. A pair of ravens was observed by WS Miller and DS Spencer as they were seen "cruising" sage-grouse nesting areas at low altitudes in a roadless area. The offending ravens flew a mile from nesting sage-grouse towards the call box, circled the raven decoy and later ate the treated egg baits. It was determined that the call box was extremely effective at calling in ravens, the raven decoy provides realism as a visual attractant and once the ravens were in the immediate area they easily located and consumed the treated egg baits. This sage-grouse protection approach could be used as a lure crop to keep ravens feeding at selected sites during removal efforts, rather than allowing ravens the opportunity to forage for the vulnerable nesting sage-grouse eggs. Whereas DS Spencer and WS Miller had been expending considerable time, effort and energy backpacking treated egg baits throughout the challenging terrain of the project area, the call box/decoy/egg bait system could prove to have a similar effect, but with fewer resources.



Valuing and Investing in Employees

During the month of May, Wildlife Services was awarded the **Presidential Migratory Bird Stewardship Award** by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Director Dan Ashe. The award primarily focused on the raptor translocation and research efforts that our program has been engaged in for more than a decade at civil and military airports across the U.S. Since 2004, the program has suc-



cessfully trapped and translocated nearly 14,000 birds of prey and conducted research to learn about general raptor movements and air space use at airports. Some of the research findings revealed new information about raptor



migration patterns that was unknown to the ornithology community. Because of the potential bird strike issues and hazards that raptors present at airports, this work has been critical to our success as a program.

Information and Communication

On May 9th, 2014, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen attended NDOW Commission Meeting in Reno.

On May 15th, 2014, SD Jensen attended the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council Meeting in Carson City.

Emerging Trends/Issues

Nothing to Report

Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights (EEO/CR)

Nothing to Report

Future Meetings and Events

June 3rd, 2014, Predatory Animal and Rodent Committee Meeting in Sparks, DS Spencer to attend.

June 6th, 2014, N-4 Grazing Board Meeting in Panaca, DS Bennett to attend.



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