

September 2014

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

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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 September, 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 **\$71.8** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$3.1** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **1,634** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$4,766** in damage and WS Specialists verified **\$42,310** in damage to utilities and other agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During September, coyotes accounted for **\$14,887** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **227** 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 September, **no** samples were processed.

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

On September 17th, a rancher in central White Pine County called and reported the loss of one lamb, valued at \$300. The lambs were their children's "4-H project" lambs and the coyote had killed the lamb in close proximity to the ranch house. The rancher had actually spotted the coyote shortly after it had killed the lamb but was unable to get a shot as the coyote left the area. Wildlife Specialist (WS) Scott Little traveled to the location and confirmed the loss. WS Little set several traps near the kill. On September 22nd, the rancher phoned and said the coyote had returned and was trapped. No further losses have been reported and the rancher was very pleased with the prompt service he received from Wildlife Services.



On September 18th, an alfalfa farmer near Ely, Nevada called concerning a problem with a badger. The badger had dug several holes and had caused more than \$1,000 in damage to both the field and the irrigation system. District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett and WS Little traveled to the location, setting several traps near the damage. One large adult male badger was trapped, bringing an end to the damage. Technical assistance was provided in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future damage.

On September 19th, a sheep producer called the East District office concerning a problem with coyotes. The rancher reported that a pair of coyotes had been killing lambs on one of his bands of sheep for the past ten days. The rancher said he had confirmed the loss of at least four lambs, valued at \$600. On September 22nd, the Ely plane responded to the location. During the morning's flight, a pair of adult coyotes was removed near the kill site. WS Little acted as the ground crew and confirmed the kills were related to the pair of coyotes removed. No further losses have been reported and technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations was also provided in an effort to prevent future losses.



On September 26th, a rancher in south western White Pine County called the East District Office concerning a problem with coyotes. The rancher reported that coyotes had come into her ranch and killed several chickens and had attacked and injured at least three sheep. The injuries to the sheep and the loss of the chickens totaled almost \$500 in damage. On September 29th, the Ely plane responded to the ranch. As the plane neared the ranch, four coyotes were observed leaving the ranch house. The plane was able to remove three of the four coyotes bringing an end to the problem. No further losses have been reported and the rancher was very pleased with the service provided by

the Ely aerial crew and Wildlife Services.

During the month of September, WS Mac Crome confirmed the loss of eight lambs, valued at \$1,200, to coyote predation. WS Crome was able to remove five coyotes near the kills using traps and calling. WS Crome also requested the assistance of the Ely plane. On two different occasions, the plane was able to remove coyotes near the sheep. No further losses have been reported and WS Crome continues to monitor the sheep in his work area.

During the month of September, WS Randy (Paul) Evans verified the loss of four lambs, valued at \$3,200, to coyote predation in southern Eureka County. In response to the depredations, WS Evans utilized calling and the Ely plane to remove two coyotes and stop the damage. Protection efforts are ongoing.

During the month of September, WS Scott MacDonald utilized calling, ground equipment and the Ely plane to resolve livestock losses in southern Elko and White Pine Counties. WS MacDonald verified that coyotes were responsible for the loss of three lambs, valued at \$450. Utilizing all available methods, five coyotes were removed in the vicinity of the depredations. Work is ongoing.

During the reporting period, DS Bennett responded to public safety issues in Clark County regarding



a lion and a group of coyotes. Coyotes were acting increasingly hostile around one group of elderly residents and stealing pets,



while a lion was causing issues with other residents. To resolve the coyote issue, DS Bennett called and removed one coyote to condition the remaining coyotes to be wary of humans. To alleviate the lion issue, DS Bennett set a large cage trap where the lion had been causing problems and instructed NDOW as to how to monitor the equipment and reset if necessary. DS Bennett provided technical assistance to educate the public on how to reduce the reasons why the wildlife had become an issue in the first place.

West District

On September 8th, WS Nick Smith worked with a Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) employee to remove beaver dams on the East Walker River as the beavers were impeding the waters flow. Ranchers and farmers depend on the river to deliver water to their crops. The water was low this year coupled with a healthy population of beavers continually building dams. Beavers are managed by NDOW and WS does not generally conduct beaver removal, unless funding is provided.



On September 8th, Pilot Wes Gossard and Crew Member (CM) Brandon VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around several calving areas and sheep bands in Washoe County. During the flight, four coyotes were removed. WS Koepke provided ground support during the effort.



On September 9th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around two sheep bands in Pershing County. The sheep producer reported that every few days he was losing lambs. The sheep were located high up the mountain and DS Spencer had a single coyote howling before daylight right in the sheep. The aerial crew flew around the sheep at first light and the skittish coyote ran down the hill directly to the sheep herder who was heading up the mountain to check on the sheep. The Basque sheep herder immediately shot the offending coyote. The aerial crew flew around the other band of sheep and removed another coyote. To date no other livestock losses have been reported.

On September 4th, WS Smith completed a NDOW chemical and immobilization class held in Reno. WS Smith later completed WS training on line and passed his certification. WS Smith periodically assists NDOW with problem black bears that may need to be immobilized. Our thanks go out to NDOW for allowing our WS employee to participate in the chemical immobilization training.

On September 9th, a rancher from Humboldt County reported that several feral swine had caused damage to his barley fields and requested assistance. WS Peter placed trail snares around the damage site and on September 12th, removed four adult feral swine in the vicinity of the barley fields. The following week, WS Peter removed one additional feral pig. WS Peter is an expert at capturing feral pigs and will continue to protect these grain fields from further damage.

On September 16th, WS George Hansen was checking equipment around several sheep bands in Lander County, which resulted in the removal of five coyotes. Very few livestock losses have been reported in his work area; however, with the onset of colder temperatures coyotes will require more caloric intake, thus increasing the likelihood of predation. A large sheep producer in Lander County called DS Spencer and expressed gratitude for all the good work WS Hansen provides. WS Hansen will continue to protect livestock in his large work area.

On September 23rd, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning operation around several fall calving areas that have experience historic losses in Humboldt County, resulting in the removal of 23 coyotes. WS Peter provided ground support.

On September 24th, Instructor Pilot Tim Keogh visited the West District and provided required annual recurrent pilot training for Pilot Gossard.

During the month of September, numerous urban coyote calls from the Reno/Sparks area were reported to the State Office. A total of nine dogs and four cats were also reportedly killed by coyotes. Technical assistance was provided to citizens to reduce the chance of them losing pets again.

On September 29th, NDOW requested assistance from WS regarding a public safety issue in an industrial area of Storey County. Workers at a large warehouse reported that coyotes were chasing people, grabbing food from them and were just highly aggressive, likely a result of people feeding the coyotes. DS Spencer inspected the situation and worked throughout the night to remove six coyotes with shooting, calling and leg-hold traps. The manager of the facility and NDOW were very pleased with the coyote removal efforts. Technical assistance was provided to the facility manager on how important it is for employees not to feed the coyotes. To date, no other coyotes have been seen in the area.



On September 30th, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around several calving areas in Humboldt and Pershing Counties to reduce predation events. During the flight, 24 coyotes were removed with most of the coyotes all near the cows. WS Koepke located several of the coyotes from the ground and sent the plane to their location. This year, requests for aerial assistance have been unusually high in the West District.

During the month of September Wildlife Biologist (WB) 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 eight species of birds from on and around the airfield including red-tailed hawks, turkey vultures and great blue herons.



WB Bowers has been contacting and networking with other agencies in the area to see if they are interested in participating in the trapping and banding of red-tailed hawks from the above mentioned airport. WS has trapped and translocated nearly 14,000 birds of prey since 2004 from airports across the country. As a result of this there has been a lot of valuable data collected and knowledge gained. Information regarding the translocation of red-tailed hawks indicates a low return rate of five to six percent. As red-tailed hawks have proven to be a hazard to aviation safety at the above mentioned airport, WB Bowers is looking forward to adding data to the collective knowledge.

WB Bowers frequently receives requests for information regarding wildlife from airfield operations and other groups at the above mentioned airfield. During the month of September WB Bowers spent a good deal of time responding to these requests. WB Bowers has seen an increase in these requests as of late and has been eager to respond. The increased interest in the Bird/Animal Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) program has helped create new relationships and opened up opportunities to broaden the success of the BASH program. WB Bowers looks forward to increasing awareness and improving the BASH program at the above mentioned airport.

WB Bowers gave a presentation at the quarterly BASH meeting to members of the BASH working group. During the presentation WB Bowers presented information on the species of birds most hazardous to aviation safety at the above mentioned airport. Topics covered included species description, behavior, attractants, strike history/damage and recommendations for each species. WB Bowers was also invited to participate as a guest speaker at a safety meeting. WB Bowers was asked to discuss certain aspects of the BASH program including areas of the airfield and surrounding property currently seen as a threat at this time. Also discussed were species currently seen as a threat to aviation safety, as well as measures being taken to disperse those species from on and near the airfield. Long term plans such as habitat modification to reduce the attractiveness of the airfield and surrounding property were also discussed.

Throughout the month of September, WB Barto continued to apply wildlife hazard management strategies in an effort to protect aviation safety at a local airport. Continued surveillance both on and around the airport is critical in developing trends in wildlife movements, which in turn allow biologists and airport managers to take the appropriate proactive management approaches. Habitat reduction and exclusion projects can be completed prior to wildlife moving into an area, and in some cases can prevent wildlife from utilizing an area entirely.

In addition to continued surveillance, WB Barto also employs non-lethal dispersal in conjunction with direct control methods to reduce avian and mammal threats to aviation safety. WB Barto harassed ten avian species including two red-tailed hawks, one California gull and several Canada geese.

Six wildlife strikes were reported throughout the month of September at the above mentioned airport, with no damage being reported. Wildlife positively identified include one juvenile coyote and one Mexican free-tailed bat. This is the fourth juvenile coyote observed at the airport in two months. Coyotes continue to grow in numbers nationally and have become recognized as a threat to aircraft. A total of 406 coyotes have been struck by aircraft nationally between 1990-2012, with 36 resulting in damage to aircraft and 12,249 hours of downtime and estimated repair costs of \$3,599,069.00.



Additionally, remains were collected from two strikes (species unidentifiable) and sent to the Smithsonian Institution, feather identification lab for identification. When strikes occur and remains are unidentifiable, a tissue sample can still provide enough DNA to identify the bird/wildlife responsible. Identification of species allows biologists and airport managers to utilize management techniques targeted specifically to those species being struck.



One red-tailed hawk was removed from the above mentioned airport in an effort to reduce wildlife threats to aviation. Red-tailed hawks can be direct and indirect threats to aviation while hunting or searching for carrion that has been struck on runways, taxiways or roadways nearby, as well as indirectly scaring birds into pathways of aircraft. This is the second red-tailed hawk removed in the last two months.

New and Developing Methods

Nothing to Report

Valuing and Investing in Employees

WB Barto has been selected once again to represent the National Wildlife Services Program overseas protecting military aircraft and service members from wildlife hazards to aircraft. WB Barto will be detailed to Kuwait from November thru January. Last year WB Barto protected the Kandahar, Afghanistan base from wildlife strikes while working on a Wildlife Hazard Assessment. For his dedication and devotion to duty, he was presented with a letter of appreciation from WS Deputy Administrator Bill Clay. We wish WB Barto well as he serves our country overseas.

Information and Communication

On September 2nd, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen and DS Bennett attended the Predatory Animal and Rodent Committee meeting in Elko.

On September 3rd, SD Jensen attended the Nevada Board of Agriculture meeting in Elko.

Emerging Trends/Issues

Nothing to Report

Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights (EEO/CR)

Nothing to Report

Future Meetings and Events

October 14th-17th, overseas military detail orientation, WB Barto to attend in Washington D.C..

Cattlemen's and Woolgrower's meeting in Elko, November 3, 4, and 5.



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