

February 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 February, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **7.5** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$88.7** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$6.2** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **124** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$2,116** in damage and WS Specialists verified **\$38,961** in damage to natural and agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During February, coyotes accounted for **\$6,861** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **333** 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 February, **no** samples were processed.

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

On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett responded to a call in western White Pine County concerning the loss one lamb and at least 12 laying hens to coyote predation. The reporting party said she had seen at least one adult coyote near her ranch house on several occasion and had been hearing several more near the house at night and during the early hours of the morning. DS Bennett traveled to the location and confirmed the damage valued at \$250. DS Bennett set several traps a short distance from the house. During the next two weeks, DS Bennett trapped three coyotes and shot another near the ranch house. No further losses have been reported. DS Bennett also provided technical assistance in the form on non-lethal recommendation to help prevent future losses. The rancher was very pleased with the help provided by Wildlife Services.



During the first week of February, Wildlife Specialist (WS) Mac Crome confirmed the loss of four ewe sheep valued at \$1,000 to coyote predation. The damage occurred near the Utah border in eastern Elko County. Twelve bands of sheep from surrounding states winter in the area. WS Crome was able to remove six coyotes near the kills by utilizing calling and trapping. The Ely plane also responded to location and removed an additional six coyotes, bringing an end to the damage. WS Crome provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations in an effort to help prevent future losses. WS Crome will continue to monitor all of the bands

of sheep in his assigned work area.

On February 17<sup>th</sup>, WS Scott MacDonald confirmed the loss of one ewe valued at \$250 to coyote predation. The damage occurred in eastern White Pine County near the Utah border. WS MacDonald was able to remove six coyotes near the kill site utilizing calling and trapping. WS MacDonald also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations in an effort to help prevent future losses. To date, no further losses have taken place and WS MacDonald is continuing to monitor the livestock in his designated work area.

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, Crew Member (CM) Wayne Rowley responded to a ranch in western Elko County after ravens had attacked and killed one newborn calf. After confirming the loss, CM Rowley used eggs treated with DRC-1339 to remove thirty ravens. CM Rowley also provided non-lethal technical assistance to the rancher in an effort to help prevent future losses. To date, no further losses have occurred.

On February 26<sup>th</sup>, the Crew Member from Ely started removing ravens at a large landfill





in Eureka County. A large number of ravens have been posing a threat to public safety and damaging property by defecating on machinery and other property at the landfill and adjoining homes and also scattering trash outside the landfill. This project will be on going for several months. Technical assistance was also provided but many of the non-lethal recommendations are already in place.



On February 17<sup>th</sup>, a cattle rancher in Lander County, east of Austin, contacted the East District office after a large group of ravens had killed one of his newborn calves by pecking its eyes out shortly after it was born. The rancher reported about 75 ravens on his calving grounds had been attacking his calves and harassing the cows as they birthed. On February 26<sup>th</sup>, the crew member from Ely responded to

the remote location and confirmed the damage. The crewmember placed eggs treated with DRC-1339 and most of the offending ravens were removed. Technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations was also provided in an attempt to help prevent future losses.

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, WS Scott Little confirmed the loss of two ewe sheep to coyote predation. The value of the two sheep was placed at \$500 and the damage occurred on a ranch in Nye County. WS Little set several pieces of ground equipment near the kill site and was able to remove the two offending coyotes. No further losses have taken place to date. WS Little also provided non-lethal technical assistance to help prevent future losses.

During the last ten days of February, Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler and intermittent MLS Casey Shields were busy working a project for the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW). They were checking an area that seemed to have an issue with Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep counts. The two spent ten days on mules riding into the remote location in an attempt to identify the reason for the decline. Although old lion sign was found, it is still unclear as to the reason for the apparent decline in sheep numbers. Work will be ongoing as weather and funding permits.



WS Dayne Barnes has been busy identifying feral swine populations in eastern Nevada. WS Barnes will be attempting to remove feral swine as small pockets of pigs are located. More than 100 feral swine have been removed in Nevada in the past fifteen or so years.

Along with flying, CM Wayne Rowley spent the month assisting with livestock protection by removing coyotes from lambing grounds. Although flying is their primary responsibility both crew members routinely assist with

other projects, handling everything from working in the shops to helping with raven and coyote depredations.





The Ely Crew Member also spent the month of February removing coyotes from lambing grounds. Specifically, five coyotes were removed from lambing grounds in White Pine County. Removing coyotes just prior to lambing is a very effective way to help minimize losses. It is also much easier to use ground equipment just before the sheep and guard dogs arrive.

WS Randy Evans was busy during February removing coyotes from lambing grounds in southern Elko County. WS Evans removed seven adult coyotes from one lambing area that has suffered very high historical losses during the past several years. WS Evans will continue to

work in his designated work area as lambing season quickly approaches.

### West District

On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, Instructor Pilot (IP) Wes Gossard and CM Brandon VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around a sheep producer and several cattle producers in Lyon County. During the flight, four coyotes were removed, one of which was observed standing over a newborn calf. WS Nick Smith provided ground support and will continue protection efforts.

On February 4<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several calving areas in Humboldt County. During the flight, six coyotes were removed. As the calving season progresses, more and more coyotes will show up on the calving grounds. WS John Peter provided ground support.



During the month, WS Ben Miller was busy running trail snares around several trans-located California bighorn sheep populations in northern Washoe County. WS Miller also has three call boxes, programmed with sounds that attract lions, should they get near the sheep. During the month, WS Miller has seen no evidence of lions in the area, but as often the case with this unpredictable weather pattern, lions can show up almost overnight. WS Miller will continue to protect bighorn sheep.

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several calving areas and a goat rancher's property. During the short flight, 12 coyotes were removed. WS George Hansen provided ground support during aerial operations.



On February 11<sup>th</sup>, WS Smith checked the M-44 devices that he had set to remove the coyotes that had previously killed a calf. The equipment check yielded the removal of three coyotes by M-44s. WS Smith will continue to utilize the M-44 devices when it benefits him, such as in the occupied cow pasture where the calf was killed.



On February 11<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several calving areas in Humboldt County. During the morning flight, 21 coyotes were removed. Almost all of the coyotes were in the calving fields or very close by. Cattle producers were pleased with the protection efforts and WS Doug Koepke provided ground support during aerial operations.

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, DS Jack Spencer and an NDOW biologist were requested to visit an airport in Douglas County that was experiencing problems with deer occasionally crossing their runways. Most of the airport has low cow fencing, though one side of the property has no fencing at all, so any animal or person could walk to the runway itself without being challenged. Recommendations were made to aggressively harass any deer seen on the property with vehicles or pyrotechnics. If this approach fails to keep the deer away from the runways, the airport management are to notify NDOW and WS to remove the deer. DS Spencer informed the airport manager that high fencing needs to be installed as soon as possible as deer are a great safety concern and a potentially dangerous situation. The high deer proof fencing accompanied with a buried fence skirt is the best long term corrective measure. DS Spencer is also working with FAA inspectors to help direct airport improvement funds quickly to this specific airport.



On February 12<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several sheep bands in Pershing County. The aerial crew removed nine coyotes in close proximity to the winter sheep bands. Protection efforts are ongoing.

On February 13<sup>th</sup>, a Churchill County resident called and reported that something had killed 30 chickens (valued at \$180) and there were large tracks present at the site. Due to the urban lion sightings in Fallon lately, WS Koepke immediately responded to the call for assistance. WS Koepke located the tracks and determined that a large feral dog was responsible for the dead chickens and provided technical assistance to the chicken owner on how to better exclude the predators from his chickens.



On Saturday, February 14<sup>th</sup>, DS Spencer checked equipment on a cattle ranch in Washoe County that had lost one calf to coyotes (valued at \$600) with another calf having its tail half eaten off by coyotes. Upon inspection, DS Spencer removed one coyote with a leg hold trap. DS Spencer heard a pair of coyotes howling nearby, which he removed by calling. DS Spencer worked with local authorities as the depredation and removal efforts occurred near homes and shopping malls. The rancher was pleased with the protection efforts DS Spencer provided and to date no other calves have been killed or maimed.

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, Pilot Gossard and CM VanderMay responded to a request from a large sheep pro-

ducer in Lander County who reported that he had a rash of killing on his winter sheep bands that resulted in the death of 15 ewes (valued at \$2,250) by coyotes. The aerial crew flew around the livestock loss damage site and removed five coyotes all in the immediate area. To date, no further losses have been reported on these particular sheep bands, however, as the sheep move into new areas, new coyotes will likely show up and cause problems. WS Hansen provided ground support during aerial operations.



During the month of February, nearly a dozen dairy producers from Churchill and Lyon Counties requested assistance with stopping their losses caused by European starlings. The dairy owners reported that starling numbers were of biblical proportions compared to all previous years. Some dairyman reported an excess of over 100,000 birds at a single location. The bitter cold that hit in northern states early this fall is thought to be the main reason for the starling increase. Dairyman reported that diseases such as Salmonella causes sickness in cows, calves and can taint milk. Some dairyman reported that because the starlings consume the best feed, cows lose a pound or two a day in milk production. The starlings consume tons of expensive feed during the

worst months, then defecate on the workers and in feed bunks and lastly dairyman need to use more antibiotics with their cows and calves with high starling populations. To alleviate the problem, DS Spencer has been treating the dairies in his district with the intent that the dairy commission and the Nevada Department of Agriculture will fund a full time bird abatement employee in the future. On February 18<sup>th</sup>, DS Spencer treated five dairies, four of which later reported that almost all the starlings had been removed from their facilities. DS Spencer will continue to assist the dairies in his district.



During the month of February, 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 six species of birds from on and around the airfield including red-tailed hawks, mallards, great blue herons and blackbirds. WB Bowers continues to monitor the airfield and surrounding area using formal surveys and general observations.

The unseasonably warm temperatures in the area seems to have many species of birds and other wildlife confused. The great blue herons arrived about two weeks earlier than they have in previous years. Mallard numbers on and around the airfield have increased early as well with numbers reminiscent of March. Other species following a similar trend are red-tailed hawks, great horned owls, killdeer and black-tailed jackrabbits.



## New and Developing Methods

Nothing to Report

## Valuing and Investing in Employees

WB Luke Barto is coming to the end of his Temporary Detail Assignment in Kuwait. Since mid November, WB Barto has been performing site visits to a number of joint-nation military airfields in various countries to document potential wildlife threats to aviation safety and remove them when feasible. WB Barto has been providing very detailed site visit reports to indicate what wildlife threats are present, when they are present, why they are present and how to best deal with them. This information will benefit the host nations service-members and aircraft, as well as their fine American counterparts.



Upon returning from Kuwait in mid-late March, WB Barto will be transitioning to the Alaska program where he accepted a promotion. Although WB Barto will be sorely missed in NV, we wish him the best as he advances his position in the program, as many of us have done in the past. We'll keep the light on for you Luke!

## Information and Communication

Nothing to Report

## Emerging Trends/Issues

Nothing to Report

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

Nothing to Report

## Future Meetings and Events

N-3 grazing board meeting in Yerington, March 12<sup>th</sup>, State Director Mark Jensen and DS Spencer to attend.



USDA APHIS

# Wildlife Services

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