

March 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

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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 March, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **8.9** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$148.9** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$7.4** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **56** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$24,224** in damage and WS Specialists verified **\$78,976** in damage to natural and agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During March, coyotes accounted for **\$10,210** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **338** 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, **12** samples were processed.

The following excerpts are a selection of activities and events of this program which occurred during the month of March, 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 March 4th, a rancher in northern White Pine County called the East District Office concerning a problem with ravens. His hired hands had witnessed a large group of ravens attacking two newborn calves. Despite their attempts to scare away the ravens, both calves died from the injuries inflicted by the ravens. The loss of the two calves was valued at \$1,800. On March 9th, Wildlife Specialist (WS) Billy Taylor traveled to the location and confirmed the damage. WS Taylor observed several ravens near the cows and calves. WS Taylor utilized eggs treated with DRC-1339 to remove the offending ravens. WS Taylor also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.

On March 9th, WS Mac Crome confirmed the loss of one ewe sheep valued at \$250. The damage occurred on a band of sheep near the Utah border in Elko County. Over the next several days, WS Crome used calling and snares to remove three adult coyotes near the kill site. No further losses have been reported and the sheep producer was very pleased with all the assistance he has received from WS Crome and Wildlife Services this winter. WS Crome also provided the sheep producer with technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.

On March 3rd, Crew Member (CM) Wayne Rowley responded to a ranch in western Elko County after ravens had attacked and killed one newborn calf. The value of the calf was placed at \$750. 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. The cattle rancher was very pleased with the assistance provided by CM Rowley and Wildlife Services. The rancher said that without the help he no doubt would have lost several more calves to the ravens.

During the first week of March, Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler and intermittent MLS Casey Shields returned to hunt unit 074 (near Jackpot, NV) to work on an NDOW project. As mentioned in the February Newsletter, MLSs Buhler and Shields have been protecting a suppressed Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep population from lion predation. During February only one old lion track had been found. After working the country over with hounds and mules...and considerable grit, the MLSs removed two mountain lions from the project area. One

lion was removed on March 4th, the second on March 5th. The lions were skinned, sampled and turned over to the Ely NDOW office. Work will continue on this project as funding and time allow. Of interest the MLSs provided NDOW with five sightings of project sheep.



On March 10th, the Ely Crew Member responded to two different cattle ranches in Eureka County that reported serious problems with ravens. Both ranches reported losses of at least one calf each valued at \$750 apiece. One rancher reported seeing a group of at least 50 ravens attacking a new-

born calf and its mother. The Ely CM used eggs treated with DRC-1339 to remove the offending ravens. No further losses have been reported and non-lethal technical assistance was provided to help prevent future losses.

Also on March 10th, MLS Buhler responded to a Eureka County producer regarding the loss of calves possibly to a lion. MLS Buhler verified the loss of five calves, loss valued at \$5,000, to lion predation. In response to the verified losses, MLS Buhler set his hounds to the lion's trail which he removed with one well-placed shot. Although non-lethal protective measures were already in place, MLS Buhler provided the producer with some additional technical assistance. The producer was very pleased with MLS Buhler's help and results.

During the week of March 20th, District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett traveled to a large military base



in southern Nevada that was experiencing a problem with both coyotes and free ranging/feral dogs. The coyotes were posing a threat to aviation safety by spending time out on the runways as military aircraft were landing and taking off. The coyotes also were posing a public safety threat by jumping over fences into base housing and had recently killed at least two pets. The free ranging/feral dogs were also posing a threat to aircraft as well as showing aggressive behavior to military personal. During the week, calling, shooting and trapping were used to remove six coyotes. Two feral dogs were also trapped unharmed and transferred to the custody of the local animal control.

Technical assistance was also provided including an interview with the base newspaper in an effort to educate military personal on non-lethal techniques to help prevent future problems. The base was very pleased with the assistance provided by Wildlife Services.

Sage-grouse nest and egg protection projects began in Elko, White Pine and Lincoln counties during March. The projects are a cooperative venture between the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) and Wildlife Services designed to increase sage-grouse nest survival. The project is in its eighth year. Sage-grouse leks are identified by NDOW biologists that have declining sage-grouse numbers that need relief from the nest raiding ravens. Hard boiled eggs treated with DRC 1339 are used to remove ravens near the Lek complexes. Pretreatment and post treatment raven counts are used to determine the number of ravens removed.



During March, the East District aerial crew and an out of state pilot flew throughout Elko, Eureka,



White Pine and Nye counties removing 123 coyotes to protect newborn calves, sheep and lambs from predation. March is always a busy time as the Wildlife Specialists and air crews are trying to prevent the newborn livestock from being eaten. Being short a pilot and two State Wildlife Specialists, getting ahead of the predation has proven to be a big challenge. DS Bennett is very appreciative of his folks stepping up and responding to the manpower shortage and also very thankful for the assistance of the out of state pilot. In addition to the direct control responses from the air crews and Wildlife Specialists, the livestock producers continue to utilize non-lethal methods to reduce predation.



WS Dayne Barnes has been working throughout the past year and the current year on documenting and removing feral swine from Nevada. Although feral swine have existed in Humboldt County for some time, a feral pig has never been removed from the eastern portion of Nevada by WS, until recently. After considerable monitoring, prebaiting and perseverance, WS Barnes patterned the Lincoln County feral swine and was rewarded March 14th, with a sow that was live caught with a snare. After euthanizing the sow, WS Barnes began the laborious process of drawing blood and tissue to be used for disease diagnostics and archival purposes at the national level. Congratulations WS Barnes!

West District

On March 2nd, Instructor Pilot (IP) Wes Gossard and CM Brandon VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around a sheep producer and several cattle producers in Humboldt County. During the flight, nine coyotes were removed. Protection efforts are ongoing and WS John Peter provided ground support.

During the week of March 11th thru March 18th, DS Jack Spencer conducted several DRC-1339 starling dairy/feedlot projects in Churchill and Lyon Counties. Dairy farmers reported that tens of thousands of birds had showed up on their dairies and were causing: high quality feed loss by starling consumption, decreases in milk production, increased risk of disease transmission to cows, more antibiotics required for sick calves, fecal contamination in livestock water and excessive bird fecal matter for workers to deal with. DS Spencer worked with dairy farmers to pre-bait the invasive European starlings and to assist DS Spencer by driving the bait truck prior to daylight for DS Spencer as he put out the DRC-1339 treated bait. The starling projects were highly successful with over 90% of the starling's removed shortly after the treatment. The dairy farmers were extremely pleased with the results and immediately noticed change around the farm at various levels. The dairy farmers reported a 1% to 4% increase in milk production immediately after the birds were removed. The DRC-1339 starling projects in the West District are finished until next winter, when the dairy commission will see if they can afford to hire a person to reduce the damage that the non-native starlings cause to dairy farmers.



On March 4th IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several

sheep producers in Washoe County. During the flight, 10 coyotes were removed. Because several sheep producers are on the California/Nevada border WS-CA George Affonso and WS-NV Doug Koepke provided valuable ground support. Livestock protection efforts will be ongoing.

On March 5th, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several cattle producers in Humboldt County. The calving grounds attract coyotes and if they are not harassed or removed they eventually cause problems for producers. During the flight, 12 coyotes were removed. Protection efforts are ongoing and WS Peter provided ground support.

On March 6th, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted a morning flight around a sheep producer and several cattle producers in Lander County. During the flight, eight coyotes were removed. Protection efforts are ongoing and WS George Hansen provided ground support.

On March 9th, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted a morning flight around several calving areas in Humboldt County. During the flight, 16 coyotes were removed. Protection efforts are ongoing and WS Koepke provided ground support.

On March 12th, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several lamb bands and nearby calving areas in Lyon County. During the flight, four coyotes were removed. Protection efforts are ongoing and WS Nick Smith provided ground support.

On March 10th, a cattle producer from Humboldt County reported that six calves (valued at \$5,800) had been killed by coyotes. On March 13th, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted a morning flight around the calving area. During the flight, five coyotes were removed. Protection efforts are ongoing and WS Hansen provided ground support.

On March 18th, a manager at a large manufacturing business in Sparks reported that a coyote was approaching workers during night shift hours and was actually coming into the doors of the building looking for food. Workers said the coyote was not aggressive, though it would casually walk up to employees and stand there. This coyote was likely conditioned to receive food from humans. DS Spencer provided technical assistance and recommended harassing the coyote as it approached workers and close the warehouse doors. To date the coyote has not returned.



On March 19th, a homeowner's association manager in Sparks reported to DS Spencer that coyotes had killed six dogs in the past two weeks in their housing development. The manager reported that one of the dogs killed by coyotes was taken off a leash while the owner was out walking the dog. DS Spencer provided technical assistance and various non-lethal means to help the homeowners dissuade coyotes from their area. Because there is no trapping or shooting allowed in urban and suburban areas, coyotes often have little difficulty stealing pets from homeowners.

The majority of the urban coyote damage calls occur within a mile of the Reno-Sparks city limits, which is not surprising as there is far more food in that zone than out in the desert. Although the WS State office receives a significant amount of pet predation calls caused by coyotes, the total

amount of damage is much greater as many incidents go unreported each year.

On March 20th, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted a long flight to a calving area in Esmeralda County. The livestock producer reported that he had lost four calves (valued at \$3,800) to coyotes. The aerial crew flew the area around the cattle and removed two coyotes. WS Koepke provided ground support.

On March 27th, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several sheep bands in Washoe County. The producer was shearing sheep with lambs just about to hit the ground in the immediate area. The aerial crew flew around the sheep and workers for several hours to give the soon to be newborn lambs a chance. During the flight, six coyotes were removed. WS Koepke provided valuable ground support. Livestock protection efforts will be ongoing as more and more lambs will be born.

During the week of March 23rd through March 27th, WS Hansen was busy running ground equipment around sheep bands and calving areas in Lander County. WS Hansen has been removing about half a dozen coyotes each week with ground equipment and reports very few livestock losses.

During the last two weeks, the West District employees have been placing ground equipment around lambing areas across western Nevada. Currently four West District employees have utilized call boxes around lambing areas that continuously play scare sounds (train whistles, car horns and battleship missiles etc.) right around the lambs to scare coyotes away. Each call box works in about a half mile area, so two call boxes spread out can really help keep coyotes at bay. The call boxes emit the scare sounds very loudly and Specialists change batteries weekly and change the sound selection every two weeks, so the coyotes don't become acclimated to the same scare sound scenario. If the lamb bands spread out over several miles then call boxes can lose their effectiveness over long distances, so two call boxes in a mile or less area is ideal for protecting young vulnerable lambs. New and innovative methods that actually help save lambs from coyotes are always appreciated by producers wanting higher lamb survivability.



During the last two weeks of March, WS Ben Miller was out protecting sage-grouse eggs and nests on the Virginia Mountains (hunt unit 022) of Washoe County. This sage-grouse egg and nest protection project is aimed at protecting sage-grouse eggs from ravens. Video surveillance cameras placed by United States Geological Survey (USGS) near sage-grouse nests clearly show ravens pushing the hens off their nests and consuming their eggs on this project. This project is a multi-agency effort (USGS, WS and NDOW). On March 24th and March 31st, WS Miller placed out DRC-1339 treated egg baits around several known sage-grouse lek sites and around last year's sage-grouse nesting areas. WS Miller will continue to protect sage-grouse eggs until late May, when nearly all of the chicks have hatched out. Work continues.



During March, 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 dispersed 1,635 animals (mostly birds) from on and around the airfield. The most common and abundant species dispersed include mallards, cinnamon teal, blackbirds and red-tailed hawks. Many of

these birds are congregated around two drainage ditches which hold water year round. 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.

WB Bowers has been busy picking up road kill in order to reduce the risk of attracting scavengers to the airfield. Scavengers have a tendency to circle and soar in areas they find road kill and other rotten or decaying material. This behavior can put them in conflicting airspace with aircraft for extended periods of time. Species that typically do this in the area of the airfield are ravens, red-tailed hawks and turkey vultures. Red-tailed hawks and ravens are year round residents to the area. Turkey vultures are here seasonally and in the last couple years have been in the area between March and October. While red-tailed hawks generally catch their own food, WB Bowers has observed them feeding on road kill several times.



New and Developing Methods

Nothing to Report

Valuing and Investing in Employees

On March 12th, State Director Mark Jensen attended the N-3 Grazing board meeting in Yerington.

On March 23rd, DS Spencer attended initial airport training in Texas to maintain his qualified airport biologist rating.

On March 30th, WB Bowers and Staff Biologist Jack Sengl attended advanced airport training in Colorado to maintain their qualified airport biologist rating.

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

Nothing to Report

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