

May 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 May, 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 **\$67.3** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$5.6** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **164** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$12,170** in damage and WS Specialists verified **\$58,583** in damage to natural and agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During May, coyotes accounted for **\$14,702** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **134** 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, **6** samples were processed.

The following excerpts are a selection of activities and events of this program which occurred during the month of May, 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 May 1st, a rancher in central Elko County contacted the Elko Office concerning a problem with coyotes. The rancher reported they had a small farm flock of sheep with fifteen ewes. Recently the ewes had started having lambs and coyotes had already killed five (a third of their crop) of the lambs. Wildlife Specialist (WS) Mac Crome traveled to the ranch and confirmed the losses, valued at \$1,000. As WS Crome was inspecting the dead lambs he observed an adult male coyote and was able to remove it with his firearm. Since the Wildlife Services plane was already in the area, they came to take a look and removed another adult coyote. Sensing more coyotes were in the area from the large amount of sign, WS Crome also set several traps near the kills. During the next two weeks, WS Crome removed two more coyotes, bringing an end to the problem. The rancher was very happy with the assistance received by WS Crome and Wildlife Services. WS Crome also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.



Also on May 1st, a sheep producer in central White Pine County called the East District Supervisor and reported that two newborn lambs had been attacked and killed by ravens. The rancher reported that he had witnessed both attacks by a group of about ten ravens. On May 5th, District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett traveled to the location and confirmed the losses, valued at \$250. As DS Bennett was placing out hard boiled chicken eggs treated with DRC-1339, he witnessed ravens harassing a newborn lamb. As the ravens would move in, the ewe would lower her head and run at them. A few days after the eggs were placed out, the rancher reported that he had not had any more problems with the ravens. He expressed his appreciation for the help received from Wildlife Services and said he no doubt would have suffered very high losses if the ravens had not been removed. DS Bennett also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.

On May 4th, WS Scott Little confirmed the loss of one 4-H lamb, valued at \$300. The following morning the Ely plane responded to the location. With the assistance of WS Little as the ground crew, the plane was able to remove one coyote near the kill. To date, no further losses have been reported. WS Little provided non-lethal recommendations, including recommending the use of guard dogs and night penning as a solution to future predation issues.

On May 5th, WS Randy Evans confirmed the loss of two lambs valued at \$300 to coyote predation. WS Evans was able to remove two coyotes and one den near the kill sites. On several



occasions, WS Evans utilized both the Elko and Ely planes. The planes were able to remove an additional nine coyotes near the bands of sheep, bringing an end to the damage. No further losses have been reported and WS Evans continues to monitor the sheep in his work area.

During the first week of May, a sheep producer in Eureka County contacted Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler concerning a problem with a mountain lion. The sheep owner reported that while checking his sheep camps he heard his guard dogs barking in a nearby wash. Upon investigation, the sheep owner observed a lion that was treed by his guard dogs. As he approached, the lion jumped out of the tree and ran away. The sheep producer looked around and found a ewe and a lamb that the lion had recently killed and buried. MLS Buhler responded to the location and was able to trail the offending lion and remove it on May 15th. MLS Buhler also confirmed the loss of eight additional lambs killed by the lion. The total value of the losses was placed at \$1,600. The lion was an adult female and was turned into the Ely Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) Office.

On May 14th, a sheep producer in central White Pine County contacted the East District Office after ravens attacked and killed two newborn lambs. The value of the lambs was placed at \$300. The sheep producer reported seeing ten ravens attacking the lambs. On May 15th, WS Randy Evans traveled to the location and confirmed the losses. WS Evans used hard boiled chicken eggs treated with DRC-1339 to remove the ravens. No further losses have been reported. WS Evans also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.



On May 15th, a sheep producer in northern White Pine County contacted WS Billy Taylor concerning a problem with ravens. The rancher had witnessed one lamb being attacked and killed by three ravens and also had found an additional nine that had been killed by ravens. The total value of the losses was set at \$1,500. On May 18th, WS Taylor responded to the ranch location and confirmed the losses. Using eggs treated with DRC-1339, WS Taylor was able to remove the offending ravens. No further losses have been reported. WS Taylor also provided non-lethal technical assistance to help prevent future losses.

During the last week of April and throughout the month of May, a pair of coyotes killed at least ten lambs and one ewe in Central White Pine County.



The value of the loss was placed at \$1,750. Since the lambs were very small, it was also suspected that the pair of coyotes had killed many more lambs and packed them away. On at least four occasions, the Ely plane responded to the area but was unable to locate the coyote. DS Bennett applied for a night shooting permit since one is required in White Pine County and spot lighted on several different nights. WS Scott Little and WS Evans also were brought in for their decoy dogs and calling experience. Despite all of these efforts, the killing continued. Finally on May 27th, DS Bennett and WS Evans, with the use of his well-trained coyote decoy dog "Sparky", were able to locate a coyote den near the sheep. The den was removed. The area will be monitored for future

losses. The extent of the damage should be known once the sheep producer starts docking and counting his lambs in a few days.

On May 19th, a sheep producer in western White Pine County contacted the East District Office after seeing a group of at least ten ravens attacking his lambs. On May 20th, DS Bennett responded to the location and confirmed the loss of five lambs valued at \$750. Using hard boiled chicken eggs treated with DRC-1339, the ten offending ravens were removed. No further losses have been reported and non-lethal technical assistance was provided to help stop future losses.

On May 19th, WS Scott MacDonald confirmed the loss of two lambs valued at \$300 to coyote predation. The Ely plane responded to the location in northern White Pine County the following morning. With the assistance of WS MacDonald as the ground crew, the plane was able to remove four coyotes near the kill site. WS MacDonald removed an additional seven coyotes utilizing traps and shooting. No further losses have been reported. WS MacDonald also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations in an effort to prevent future losses.



On May 18th, a sheep producer contacted MLS Buhler after a lion killed three lambs and a ewe, valued at \$700. MLS Buhler traveled to the location in eastern Eureka County and confirmed the losses. After trailing the lion for more than twelve hours, MLS Buhler caught up to the big tom lion in the cliffs only to have it break and run. After a couple more hours, MLS Buhler's dogs once again caught the large cat. This time a well-placed shot brought an end to the damage. The lion was an adult five year male that weighed approximately 150 pounds. The sheep producer was very pleased with the prompt response and contacted the East District Supervisor to express his appreciation.



On May 18th, WS Dayne Barnes removed one pig from the feral swine project area in Eastern Nevada. WS Dayne has placed many trail snares as well as two corral traps in an effort to remove feral swine. The project area is very large and has an abundance of thick cover making locating the few pigs very difficult. Despite this, WS Barnes continues to work to remove these pigs.

During the week of May 18th, the ATOC instructor pilot traveled to Elko and assisted with flying the Elko plane, during the week. The plane was very effective in removing several depredating coyotes as well as locating one den near a band of sheep in southern Elko County. The Nevada Wildlife Services program is very thankful for the assistance received from the Utah pilot.

On May 20th, a call was received at the East District Office concerning the loss of three calves to lion predation. The damage occurred on a remote cattle ranch in Eureka County. The following morning, MLS Buhler responded to the ranch and confirmed the loss of the calves, valued at \$3,000.

MLS Buhler placed six of his best hounds on the lion's track. The track was at least 12 hours old and had been rained on all night. During most of the day, MLS Buhler was on foot trailing the lion's tracks in the mud. Late in the day, MLS Buhler and his well trained dogs over took the lion and jumped it. After a short race, the adult female lion was treed and dispatched. No further losses have been reported. The rancher was very pleased with the assistance provided by Wildlife Services and MLS Buhler.

On May 20th and 21st, DS Bennett conducted a field inspection with both MLS Jim Buhler and WS Randy Evans. During the field inspection, MLS Buhler removed two depredating mountain lions and WS Randy Evans assisted the Elko plane in removing six coyotes and one den near several bands of sheep. Field inspections are very important to ensure that employees have what they need to safely get the job done and ensure all policies and regulations are being followed as well as a good chance to talk to cooperators. All the cooperators contacted were very thankful for the assistance provided by both MLS Buhler and WS Evans.

On May 26th, a sheep producer reported that he had lost at least two lambs to raven predation. On May 27th, DS Bennett responded to the location and confirmed the loss, valued at \$250. While investigating the damage, DS Bennett witnessed a raven harassing two newborn lambs. The raven was successfully removed with the rifle. An additional twenty ravens were observed in and around the lambs. Hard boiled chicken eggs treated with DRC-1339 were used to remove ten more ravens, bringing an end to the damage. DS Bennett also provided non-lethal technical assistance to help prevent future losses.



During the month of May, WS Billy Taylor confirmed the loss of 18 lambs, valued at \$3,725, to coyote predation. WS Taylor has been filling in for the vacant Wildlife Specialist position in White Pine County, protecting more than 10,000 sheep that are lambing in his assigned work area. WS Taylor has removed eight coyotes near the kills. On several occasions, the Ely plane also responded to the kill locations and removed several more coyotes including two that were observed in the band of sheep. WS Taylor continues to monitor the many sheep in his designated work area.

West District

On May 1st, Instructor Pilot (IP) Wes Gossard and Crew Member (CM) Brandon VanderMay conducted a morning flight around several lambing bands in Humboldt County. During the flight, eight coyotes were removed and three dens located. Protection efforts are ongoing and WS John Peter provided ground support.

On May 6th, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several calving areas in Pershing County. During the flight, one coyote was removed and one den located. Protec-



tion efforts are ongoing and WS George Hansen provided ground support. Protection efforts are ongoing.

During the month of May, WS Nick Smith was busy protecting five bands of sheep in Lyon County. So far he has good success removing offending coyotes and keeping them away from young vulnerable lambs. WS Smith has been utilizing M-44s, trail snares, and leghold traps around the lambing areas for protection.

Bad weather has plagued western Nevada in recent weeks with considerable amounts of rain and wind, thus confounding aerial operations for protection efforts. It's a double edge, since bad weather hampers flying, but the moisture is much needed for livestock in western Nevada.

On May 6th, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several calving areas in Pershing County. During the flight, one coyote was removed and one den located. Protection efforts are ongoing and WS Hansen provided ground support. Protection efforts are ongoing.

On May 13th, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning flight around several lambing areas in Humboldt County. During the flight, two coyotes were removed and one den located. Protection efforts are ongoing and WS Peter provided ground support. Protection efforts will be ongoing.



On May 18th, a gentleman from Reno called 911 because he heard someone in his attic. Local authorities arrived on scene and inspected his home, finding no intruder. The following night, the gentlemen once again heard noises in his attic and this time when police inspected his attic, they discovered several masked bandits (raccoons) scampering away. The WS' state office provided non-lethal technical assistance to help resolve his wildlife problem.



During the month of May, WS Ben Miller was busy protecting sage-grouse eggs and nests on the Virginia Mountains (hunt unit 022) and on a large sage-grouse lek complex near Battle Mountain. WS Miller reported very few ravens observed on the Virginia Mountains after several months of intense raven removal using the avicide DRC-1339 in chicken eggs. United States Geological Survey and Nevada Department of Wildlife are compiling and analyzing data to determine the effect raven removal had on protecting sage-grouse eggs.

On May 27th, a large goat producer from Lander County reported that six kids (valued at \$1,200) had been

killed by coyotes. WS Hansen visited the location and placed leghold traps and trail snares in the vicinity of the dead kids. On Saturday May 30th, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an aerial operation around the dead kids and removed two coyotes. WS Hansen also removed three coyotes by method of leghold traps. To date, no other livestock losses have been reported. WS Hansen will continue to protect these goats.

On May 22nd, a sheep producer from Lyon County reported that eight ewes (valued at \$1,600) had been killed by a lion. WS Smith inspected the situation and confirmed that the damage was caused by a large lion. WS Smith worked through the weekend trying to capture the depredating lion, but it had moved into a nearby canyon. WS Smith located one additional dead ewe (valued at \$200) which he set on access trails with trail snares. On May 26th, WS Smith captured the depredating lion. The livestock producer was very pleased with the protection efforts WS Smith provided. To date, no further lion losses have been reported.

On May 29th, DS Jack Spencer conducted an annual Canada goose meeting in Reno which was attended by several organizations. This year a lot of the local ponds and pastures have dried up because of the drought and for the first time in many years, there are a lot fewer Canada geese in the Reno/Sparks area. This is good news since the objective of the goose round up is to protect a large airport in Reno from possible goose strikes. As the geese have molted, next week they will be captured in drive corral traps and turned over to NDOW where they translocate the problem birds to wildlife management areas in eastern Nevada.



APHIS/WS/NWRC

On May 27th, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around two lamb bands in Pershing County. These lamb bands were losing a lamb a day until the aerial crew arrived. During the flight, four coyotes were removed. WS Koepke provided ground support during aerial operations and no further lamb losses have been reported.

On May 28th, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an early morning aerial operation around five lamb bands in Lyon County. These bands were starting to experience lamb losses on a daily oc-

currence. DS Spencer and WS Smith arrived early and located a pair of coyotes and sent the aerial crew to the coyote's location. It took some time, however, the aerial crew found the coyotes not far from the damage site and promptly removed the pair. The aerial crew located the den and DS Spencer and WS Smith hiked into the remote area and removed the den. No livestock losses have been reported since the removal of the coyotes. DS Spencer will continue to work with field staff and visit livestock cooperators whenever possible.



On May 29th, IP Gossard and CM Vander-May conducted an early morning aerial operation around seven lamb bands in Washoe County. The sheep producers reported that every few days they were losing a lamb to

coyotes on the California/Nevada State line. Because of the long distance the aerial crew left the airport before 5:00 am to reach the problem area at first light. During the aerial operation, three coyotes were removed. WS-CA George Affonso provided ground support during aerial operations. Protection efforts are ongoing and Nevada will continue to work closely with the WS-CA program to better serve our cooperators who have livestock in both states.

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 dispersed 454 birds from on and around the airfield. The most common and abundant species dispersed include mallards, cinnamon teal, gadwall and white-faced ibis. 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.



New and Developing Methods

Nothing to Report

Valuing and Investing in Employees

During the reporting period, WS Smith accepted a transfer and promotion to the Wyoming WS Program. We wish WS Smith good fortune and hope he finds his new position both rewarding and challenging.

Information and Communication

On May 14th, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen and DS Bennett attended the NDOW Predator Committee Meeting in Reno.

Emerging Trends/Issues

Nothing to Report

Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights (EEO/CR)

Nothing to Report

Future Meetings and Events

PARC meeting June 2nd in Reno at NDA headquarters. SD Jensen to attend.

N-4 Grazing Board meeting June 5th in Ely, NV. SD Jensen and DS Bennett to attend.

N-1 Grazing Board meeting June 17th in Elko, NV. SD Jensen and DS Bennett to attend.



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