

May 2016

# 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)

775-851-4848

## 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 **5.4** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$81** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$12** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **380** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$26,526** in damage and WS Specialists verified **\$22,457** 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 **\$10,655** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **266** 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, **25** samples were processed.

*The following excerpts are a selection of activities and events of this program which occurred during the month of May, 2016.*

## 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 website: <http://agri.nv.gov/Wildlife>. Where wildlife biology and damage management methods are offered by species.

## East District

During the last two days of April and the first two days of May, a sheep producer in central Elko County contacted Wildlife Specialist (WS) Mac Crome concerning the loss of five lambs, valued at \$750. The sheep producer reported seeing and hearing a large number of coyotes near his sheep. After confirming the losses, WS Crome went to work. During the next two weeks, WS Crome was able to remove four adult coyotes and two dens near the location of the kills. WS Crome also requested the assistance of the Elko plane. The plane removed eighteen adult coyotes in two flights, bringing an end to the damage. WS Crome also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.



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On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, WS Scott Little confirmed the loss of one lamb, valued at \$150. The damage occurred on a remote band of sheep in central White Pine County. WS Little set several traps near the location of the kill. The following morning, WS Little trapped a large

adult male coyote. On May 4<sup>th</sup>, the Ely plane also responded to the location and was able to remove an additional four coyotes. WS Little also provided technical assistance, in the form of non-lethal recommendations, to help prevent future losses. Without the help from WS Little and the Ely plane, losses would no doubt be much higher.

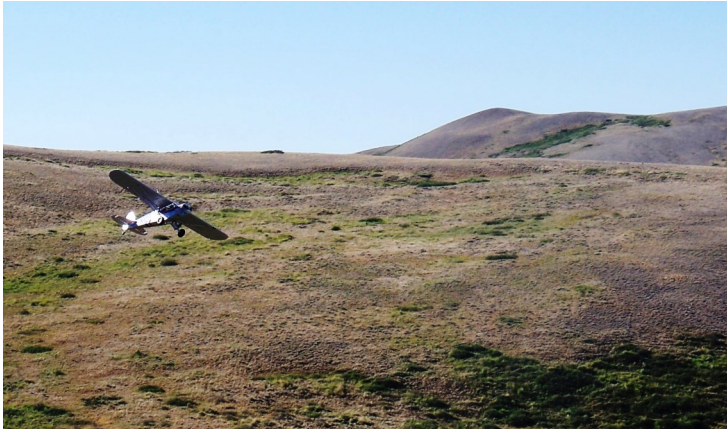


On May 6<sup>th</sup>, Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler was contacted by a sheep producer in western White Pine County concerning a possible problem with a mountain lion. The rancher reported that several lambs had been killed and he suspected it was a lion that had killed them. After loading his camp, mules and dogs, MLS Buhler responded to the location. MLS Buhler verified the loss of thirty three lambs, valued at \$4,950, to lion predation. On May 12<sup>th</sup>, the lion returned to the band of sheep. MLS Buhler used six well trained tracking hounds to trail the lion and tree it. The offending lion was a twelve year old female. A necropsy revealed the lion was full of lamb meat and wool. No further losses have been reported.

On May 9<sup>th</sup>, WS Scott Little confirmed the loss of six lambs, valued at \$900, to raven predation. The ravens had pecked the eyes out of the lambs leaving them alive but blind. The sheep producer had to put the lambs down. WS Little placed out hard boiled chicken eggs treated with DRC-1339 near the location of the kills. A post inspection showed the offending ravens had been removed and no further losses have been reported. WS Little also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.



On May 12<sup>th</sup>, WS Scott MacDonald was contacted by a sheep producer in northern White Pine County concerning the loss of two lambs, valued at \$300. WS MacDonald traveled to the location and confirmed the losses were due to coyotes.



During the next several days, WS MacDonald removed four coyotes using traps. Knowing that a few more coyotes were near the lambs, WS MacDonald requested the assistance of the Ely plane. During an early morning flight near the kill sites, the plane was able to remove an additional three coyotes. No further losses have been reported. WS MacDonald also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.

On May 13<sup>th</sup>, WS Allen Eldridge confirmed the loss of four lambs, valued at \$600. WS Eldridge was able to remove two adult coyotes using traps. WS Eldridge also requested the assistance of the Ely plane. The plane responded a few days later and was able to remove five more coyotes. WS Eldridge also removed one den near the location of the kills, bringing an end to the damage.

On May 15<sup>th</sup>, MLS Buhler received a call from a sheep producer in eastern Eureka County concerning the loss of ten lambs and one ewe, valued at \$1,750, to lion predation. MLS Buhler traveled to the remote band of sheep and confirmed the losses. MLS Buhler used his mule and six well trained tracking hounds to remove the offending lion. The lion was a 125 pound male in excellent condition. A necropsy revealed the lion was full of lamb and wool. No further losses have been reported.



On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, the East District office received a call concerning a problem with ravens in Eureka County. The caller reported that several ravens had attacked and killed one of her baby goats. On May 24<sup>th</sup>, WS Hunter Bodenchuk traveled to the location and confirmed the loss, valued at \$225. WS Bodenchuk used hard boiled eggs treated with DRC-1339 to remove the offending ravens. No further losses have been reported. WS Bodenchuk also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.

During the week of May 31<sup>st</sup>, a Utah helicopter was used to remove coyotes in Eureka County to help protect fawning mule deer and sage-grouse. During three days of flying, 51 coyotes and several coyote dens were removed. The project is ongoing and funded with the \$3 predator fee associated with each big game application in Nevada's big game drawing process.



**West District**

On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Instructor Pilot (IP) Wes Gossard and Crew Member (CM) Brandon VanderMay conducted a flight around five lamb bands in Washoe County. During the flight, seven coyotes were removed and the aerial crew located one coyote den. WS Doug Koepke provided ground support and his tracking hound was effective at trailing several coyotes that might have otherwise eluded capture. Protection efforts are ongoing.

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted a flight around two bands of sheep in Lander County. During the flight, five coyotes were removed and the aerial crew spotted one den. DS Jack Spencer provided ground support. Protection efforts are ongoing.



On May 9<sup>th</sup>, WS Carl Frey inspected a sheep ranch in Lyon County that had previously lost two lambs. WS Frey set M-44s in the area of the loss, resulting in the removal of two coyotes. WS Frey will continue to protect livestock in his work area.



During the month of May, DS Spencer, WS John Peter, WS Ben Miller and WS Cameron Green placed DRC-1339 treated egg baits in several western Nevada Counties around sage-grouse leks/nests to protect sage-grouse eggs from ravens. Protection efforts ceased in late May after the chicks hatched.

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted a flight around two bands of sheep in Lander County. During the flight, five coyotes were removed and one den was spotted. DS Spencer provided ground support. Protection efforts are ongoing.

On May 12<sup>th</sup>, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted a flight around seven lamb bands in Washoe County. During the flight, six coyotes were removed and one den was located. WS Koepke and WS-CA George Affonso provided ground support during aerial operations. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

On May 13<sup>th</sup>, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted a flight around two bands of sheep in Humboldt County in response to the loss of two lambs. During the flight, seven coyotes were removed and one den was located. As sheep graze into new areas, they often are met with more coyotes. WS Peter provided ground support. Protection efforts are ongoing.

On May 19<sup>th</sup>, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay again flew around seven lamb bands in Washoe County. During the flight, seven coyotes were removed and one den was located. As protection efforts occurred on the California border, WS-CA provided ground support. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted a flight around three bands of sheep in Pershing County. This band has been losing two to three lambs to coyotes every other day. The aerial crew flew high on the mountain before finally finding three coyotes running together above the sheep. The aerial crew removed three coyotes and WS Koepke inspected the dead coyotes and found they had meat and wool in their stomachs. WS Koepke also noticed that all three of the coyotes were old large males with worn down teeth. It is usually rare to find older males living together during the pup rearing season, however, once in a while it is observed. During the flight, four coyotes were removed. WS Koepke provided ground support and to date, no further livestock losses have been reported. Protection efforts are ongoing.



The West District lambing period has just about come to a close with around 21 lamb bands. While every year there are several hundred lambs lost by predators (primarily coyotes) in April, May and June, early reports indicate that lamb docking rates in the West District were above average. As with the past eight years, the loss of a wildlife specialist and mountain lion specialist in the West District has been felt, fortunately, the remaining wildlife specialists have done an excellent job making do. Several livestock producers in the district have called DS Spencer, commending the exceptional efforts of our wildlife specialists and aerial crew.

On May 29<sup>th</sup>, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted a flight around two bands of sheep in Lander County that were losing lambs every other day to coyotes. These lamb bands were spread out from the bottom of the canyon to the top of a 9,000 peak. The aerial crew finally located an offending coyote feeding on a lamb on top of the peak and promptly removed it. WS George Hansen provided ground support. Protection efforts are ongoing.

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. Specifically, 359 birds from 16 species were dispersed from the airfield. In addition, one species of mammal was lethally removed. Wildlife numbers are down from last month, but there are still quite a number of species on and around the airfield. This is primarily due to irrigation season and an overall increase in water levels compared to the last couple of years.

During the month of May there were no bird strikes reported. However, as a follow up from the previous month (April) a strike and a case of animal remains found on the runway (which were pending identification at the time of the last newsletter) were identified by the Smithsonian as a white-crowned sparrow and a black-tailed jackrabbit. The strike involving the white-crowned sparrow was a damaging strike. White crowned sparrows are a small songbird which are common to the area in the fall and winter months. While they are observed on occasion in the spring and late summer, it is usually in low numbers. While small single birds are not normally considered a huge risk to aircraft they can and do cause damage once in a while. It is possible that more than one individual was struck, especially if they were in the process of migrating to their spring and summer range.

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Also during the month of May, WB Bowers received numerous reports of animals that had taken up residence in a couple of culverts in close proximity to a soccer field. Due to an incident the previous month involving an aggressive coyote which had chased a dog, many people were concerned. WB Bowers inspected the situation and found a female kit fox with pups using the area. WB Bowers worked with the airfield manager to get some information out to all base personnel in an effort to let people know the substantial differences between kit foxes and coyotes. It was explained that the little kit foxes in general don't pose the safety risks coyotes do. However, it was emphasized that they are wild animals and they should not be handled or fed. WB Bowers continued to monitor the situation, and as expected, the kit foxes moved to another area with less human activity.



During the month of May, WB Hunter Moyles continued protection work at an international airport in Reno and several Nevada Air National Guard installations. During the month, WB Moyles continued to deter wildlife from using/crossing the airfield operations area (AOA). In an effort to deter these avian/mammalian species from crossing the AOA, WB Moyles utilized several methods of harassment. WB Moyles dispersed 204 birds and mammals from the airfield. Wildlife dispersed from the airfield included 14 species of birds and mammals. WB Moyles will also continue to monitor the AOA and surrounding areas using formal surveys and general observations.

During the month of April, WB Moyles had noticed a decrease in Canada geese, and ducks on surrounding properties. Hazing has still been deployed to keep the large geese away from the airfield. During the month, WB Moyles hazed four Canada geese, and 27 ducks off of airport property. Methods used to deter wildlife included the use of pyrotechnics, crackers shells and the vehicle. Decreased activity on the airport is due to the warm temperatures, spring green up and nesting activity.

On May 5<sup>th</sup> WB Moyles was contacted by airport personnel, asking for assistance with a bird problem around their jet ways. WB Moyles responded and removed 11 nests from under the jet ways, the nests removed where from starlings and pigeons. WB Moyles will continue to monitor the area for nesting activity, and continue to disperse birds and make it less attractive for nesting.

On May 10<sup>th</sup> WB Moyles was performing his routine perimeter checks on the airport property when he found a hen mallard and nine ducklings around some hangers. WB Moyles hand caught the birds and removed them from the airfield. He later transferred them to the Wild Animal Infirmary in Carson City where they will be rehabbed and translocated to a safer environment.



Along with several non-lethal harassment techniques, WB

Moyles deployed some lethal means of control to eliminate aircraft strike potential at the prior mentioned airport. Specifically, WB Moyles removed some offending species for public safety including: 23 Marmots, six pigeons, one mallard and one California ground squirrel, utilizing trapping, and shooting. Aircraft protection methodology will continue to be employed at the large airport to better minimize the potential for animal and birds to collide with aircraft. Protection efforts are ongoing.

## **Valuing and Investing in Employees**

During the week of May 16<sup>th</sup> thru May 20<sup>th</sup> WB Moyles attended the “2016 Initial Qualified Airport Biologist” training in Ontario, CA.

## **Information and Communication**

On May 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, State Director (SD) Mark Jensen attended the Board of Wildlife Commissioner’s Meeting in Reno.

During the week of May 16<sup>th</sup>, WS Dayne Barnes attended the annual feral swine meeting in Park City, Utah. Topics covered during the meeting included feral swine trapping techniques, disease sampling and feral swine monitoring techniques. Several WS employees from as far away as the east coast gave presentations concerning feral swine removal techniques. WS Barnes continues his feral swine removal techniques in Lincoln County Nevada. Within the last year, WS Barnes has removed eight feral swine from Lincoln County.

On May 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, District Supervisor (DS) Joe Bennett attended the National Trapper’s Association’s annual western convention in Missoula, Montana. DS Bennett was asked to provide a presentation and demo on the Wildlife Services program and coyote damage control. More than 300 people attended.



On May 31<sup>st</sup>, WB Moyles held the 31<sup>st</sup> annual Goose roundup coordination meeting in Reno.

## **Emerging Trends/Issues**

Nothing to Report

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

Nothing to Report

## **Future Meetings and Events**

June 7<sup>th</sup>, East District Annual Meeting in Ely. SD Jensen, Staff Biologist Jack Sengl and Budget Technician (BT) Jennifer Mowbray to attend.

June 13<sup>th</sup> thru 17<sup>th</sup>, IA and MI WS program review in IA/MI. SD Jensen to attend/review.

June 17<sup>th</sup>, N-4 Grazing Board Meeting in Panaca. DS Bennett to attend.



USDA APHIS

# Wildlife Services



USDA-APHIS-WS  
8775 Technology Way  
Reno, NV 89521

