

May 2017

# 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 **4.4** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$63** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$4.2** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **1,704** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$13,020** in damage and WS Specialists verified **\$48,745** 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 **\$14,775** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **525** 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, **23** samples were processed.

*The following excerpts are a selection of activities and events of this program which occurred during the month of May, 2017.*

## 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

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, the Elko plane responded to a request for assistance from a cattle rancher in central Elko County. The rancher had lost at least two calves earlier and was seeing several more coyotes around his newborn calves.



Since the adjoining allotment was scheduled to have sheep arrive in a few weeks, it was also flown. During the flight, 14 coyotes were removed. Wildlife Specialist (WS) Mac Crome assisted as the ground crew for the day. Work will be ongoing in the area this spring.

On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Ely plane responded to a request for assistance from three different ranches in eastern White Pine County. One ranch was a cattle ranch that was seeing coyotes in with their newborn calves, another ranch was a cattle ranch that also had a farm flock of sheep. In the past this ranch had lost several lambs to coyote predation.

The last ranch flown was a ranch that had both cattle and sheep. They had lost at least one lamb and have had very high lamb loss in the past. During the morning's flight, the plane was able to remove nine coyotes. Work will be ongoing on all three ranches as they continue to have more lambs and calves.

On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Elko plane responded to a request for assistance from a sheep rancher in southern Elko County. The sheep producer had already lost several lambs to coyote predation and was worried he would lose many more. With the help of WS Randy Evans as the ground crew, the plane was able to remove four coyotes near the band of sheep. Work will be ongoing as the lambing continues. WS Evans also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.

On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Ely plane responded to a request for assistance from a sheep producer in northern White Pine County. The sheep rancher had lost several lambs as confirmed by Field Assistant (FA) Allen Eldridge. During the morning's flight, a pair of coyotes were removed near the kills. FA Eldridge will continue to monitor the sheep in his area. FA Eldridge also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.

On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Elko plane flew on Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) project 38 in an area identified by NDOW for antelope protection. Antelope fawn recruitment has been low in the areas identified. During the morning's flight, 22 coyotes were removed near several groups of antelope. Work will be ongoing as the antelope continue to have their fawns.

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, the Ely plane responded to a call in eastern White Pine County from a sheep producer that had lost several ewes and lambs to coyote predation. FA Eldridge had previously confirmed the damage. With FA Eldridge as the ground crew, the plane was able to remove three coyotes near the location of the kills. Work will be ongoing as the sheep producer continues to lamb out this spring. FA Eldridge also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, the Elko plane received a request for assistance from a sheep producer in central Elko County. The sheep producer just arrived on the allotment and was hearing and seeing several coyotes in an area that he has had very high losses in the past. During the flight the plane was able to remove 10 coyotes near the sheep. Removing coyotes prior to confirming losses in areas with historically high losses can save the sheep producer thousands of dollars. The sheep producer was very grateful for the help he received from the Elko plane, the Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA) and Wildlife Services.

On May 5<sup>th</sup>, the Elko plane responded to a request from a sheep producer in northern White pine and south-

ern Elko Counties. The rancher had lost at least two lambs valued at \$300 to coyote predation. Both kills were confirmed by WS Randy Evans. During the flight, two coyotes were removed near the kills. No further losses have been reported. WS Evans provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.

On May 5<sup>th</sup>, the Ely plane flew on NDOW project 38 to protect antelope fawns from coyote predation. NDOW has identified several areas in the east district for coyote removal. This particular project was located in northern White Pine County. During the flight, three coyotes were removed near several herds of antelope. Work will be ongoing this spring.

On May 8<sup>th</sup>, the Elko plane flew on NDOW project 38 near the Idaho border. This particular project is designed to remove coyotes to protect antelope fawns from coyote predation. During the flight, three coyotes were removed. Increased winds caused the flight to be cut short.

On May 9<sup>th</sup>, the Elko plane responded to a request for assistance from a cattle rancher in central Elko County. The rancher had lost several calves in the past to coyote predation and had reported that he saw several coyotes in and around his newborn calves. With WS Mac Crome as the ground crew, the plane was able to remove 15 coyotes from the pastures that experienced the losses.

On May 10<sup>th</sup>, the Elko plane responded to a request for assistance from a sheep producer that had lost one lamb valued at \$150. During the morning's flight, seven coyotes were removed. WS Mac Crome was the ground crew during the operation. WS Crome also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses. No further losses have been reported.



On May 12<sup>th</sup>, the Elko plane responded to a request for assistance from a cattle ranch in Elko County that had reported historically high losses in the past to coyote predation. During the flight, five coyotes were removed in the calving pastures. Work will be ongoing during the calving season this spring.

On May 15<sup>th</sup>, the Elko plane flew for a sheep producer in central Elko County. Earlier, WS Mac Crome had confirmed the loss of two lambs, valued at \$300. With WS Crome helping as the ground crew, 14 coyotes were removed near the band of sheep and the location of the kills. No further losses have been reported. WS Crome also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.

On May 16<sup>th</sup>, WS Crome removed an additional coyote with a firearm and removed a den in response to the above depredation. The coyote was removed at the depredation site. On May 18<sup>th</sup>, WS Crome removed another coyote nearby to hopefully end the losses.

During the week of May 8<sup>th</sup>, several NDOW projects were flown using a helicopter from Utah. Project 40 was flown and 26 coyotes and two dens were removed. The project is designed to remove coyotes to protect mule deer and sage-grouse. At least three areas were flown on NDOW project 38. Project 38 is designed to remove coyotes to protect big game. The three projects flown were in Nye County to protect antelope fawns from coyote predation. A total of 36 coyotes and two dens were removed. Work will continue during the mule deer fawning and antelope fawning seasons.





On May 13<sup>th</sup>, the Ely plane flew two antelope projects in Lincoln and southern White Pine Counties. During the morning's flight, four coyotes were removed. The plane observed at least four antelope fawns near the location the coyotes were removed. Work will be ongoing in these areas for the next month or so as more baby antelope are born.

On May 19<sup>th</sup>, the Elko plane responded to a call in southern Elko and north eastern White Pine County from a sheep producer. The rancher had lost at least two lambs valued at \$300 to coyote predation and has had a history of very high losses in the past. During the morning's flight, with the help of WS Randy Evans as the ground crew, the plane was able to remove four coyotes near the location of the damage. 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 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Elko plane flew on NDOW project 38 to protect antelope fawns. During the flight, 20 coyotes were removed near several herds of antelope near the Idaho border. Work will be ongoing for the next several weeks.



During the week of May 23<sup>rd</sup>, Wildlife Services used a contract helicopter in the East District to fly on NDOW project 40 and NDOW project 38. NDOW Project 40 is designed to remove coyotes in hunt unit 144 to protect both mule deer and sage-grouse. NDOW project 38 is the statewide project to protect wildlife from coyote predation. The areas flown to protect antelope were Tonopah and the Jackpot areas which were identified by NDOW with low antelope recruitment. During the week, 132 coyotes and five coyote dens were removed. Work will be ongoing as the mule deer and antelope continue to have fawns this spring and early summer.

On May 24<sup>th</sup>, the Ely plane responded to a request for assistance from a sheep producer in Eureka County. One sheep producer reported that his herders were hearing several coyotes near the sheep while another sheep rancher was reported to be bringing 7,000 more sheep into the same area. During the flight, with FA Hunter Bodenchuk as the ground crew, the plane was able to remove four coyotes. Work will be ongoing in the area.

On May 24<sup>th</sup> and May 26<sup>th</sup>, the Elko plane flew several bands of sheep in northern Elko County. The herders reported that they were seeing and hearing a large number of coyotes near their sheep. The area has also had a high number of losses in the past. During the two flights, with WS Mac Crome as the ground crew, the plane was able to remove 15 coyotes. Work will be ongoing.

On May 26<sup>th</sup>, the Ely plane flew on NDOW project 38 in White Pine County to protect antelope fawns from coyote predation. During the morning's flight the plane was able to remove three coyotes near several groups of antelope. Work will be ongoing as the antelope have just started having their fawns the last couple of weeks.



On May 28<sup>th</sup>, NDA MLS Jim Buhler received a call concerning the loss of two ewe sheep to lion predation. The sheep herder reported that while checking his flock he came across two ewes that had just been killed. Both the carcasses were still warm. The value of the sheep was placed at \$500. MLS Buhler immediately responded to the location in north eastern White Pine County. After a short pursuit, MLS Buhler was able to tree and remove the 135 pound male lion. No further losses have been reported. The sheep producer was very pleased with the quick response.

May was a very busy month for FA Eldridge. During the month, FA Eldridge documented the loss of two lambs to raven predation and 14 lambs, three adult ewes and two calves to coyote predation. The total loss came to \$9,300. During the month, FA Eldridge was able to remove 143 ravens and six coyotes in response to the damage. FA Eldridge also used the Ely plane on several occasions. On May 30<sup>th</sup>, with the help of FA Eldridge, the plane was able to remove four coyotes near the location of several kills including a pair of coyotes in the band of sheep. As the plane flew over the band, a sheep herder was holding up a freshly killed lamb. A few minutes later the plane spotted and removed the pair of coyotes as they were sneaking out of the band of sheep. Work will be ongoing until the lambs are shipped out to higher country for the summer.



During the month of May, WS Scott Little confirmed the loss of five lambs to predation. One lamb was killed by coyotes and four lambs were killed by ravens. Using eggs treated with DRC 1339, WS Little removed 60 ravens near the location of the damage. WS Little also removed nine coyotes using traps, calling, decoy dogs and shooting. The total loss for the five lambs was placed at \$1,900. The cattle and sheep producers in WS Little's area are very pleased with his excellent work ethic.

During the month of May, NDA MLS Jim Buhler and WS interim MLS Casey Shields hunted lions in NDOW hunt unit 144 for the protection of mule deer. During the month, one adult female lion was removed. Hunting lions on dry ground is very difficult to say the least. Work will be ongoing in the area.

During the month of May, WS Billy Taylor and WS Mike Eldridge were very busy working NDOW project 21. Project 21 is designed to remove ravens, coyotes and badgers to protect sage-grouse nests and eggs. Treatment areas in the East District include Lincoln, White Pine, Eureka, and Elko Counties. Ravens are removed using eggs treated with DRC 1339, while coyotes and badgers are removed by shooting. Work will be coming to an end in the next week or so for the season.

During the month of May, FA Hunter Bodenchuk confirmed the loss of 18 lambs to both coyote and raven predation. FA Bodenchuk was able to remove 44 ravens, three adult coyotes, including one large male in an area that had lost several lambs, and two coyote dens. The total value of the losses was set at \$3,600. Without the help from FA Bodenchuk, the losses would no doubt have been much higher. FA Bodenchuk also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.

During the month of May, WS Dayne Barnes continued working on the feral swine project in Nevada. Dayne is using several methods including trail cameras, a thermal imaging scope and trail cameras, and checking water sources for any pig sign. Work will be ongoing until the end of August.

## West District

The West District aerial crew continued protection efforts during the month of May, often flying weekends during this busy period time of the year. The aerial crew will continue to stay busy flying as long as there is decent weather to do so safely. In the next month or so many of the lambs will either move to California or move up the mountain where fixed wing operations are not conducive.

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, Instructor Pilot (IP) Wes Gossard and Crew Member (CM) Brandon VanderMay conducted a flight around a large lamb-





ing area in Washoe County. During the flight, 12 coyotes were removed. Because this area was on the California border, WS-CA personnel provided valuable ground support. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted a flight around a large lambing area in Lyon County. The rancher reported that 11 lambs, valued at \$1,700, had been killed by coyotes. So far this spring, the sheep producer has lost 72 sheep between coyotes and lions. During the operation, a pair of coyotes was removed in close proximity of the sheep. The aerial crew then proceeded to fly several other bands of sheep a few miles away. In the meantime, the herder saw a coyote in the lamb band that had just been flown. The herder called the rancher, who then called DS Jack Spencer to report the coyote. DS Spencer relayed the message to the aerial crew which returned to resolve the problem. The sheep producer was pleased with the protection efforts.

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted a flight around a large lambing area in Humboldt County. During the flight, four coyotes were removed. WS John Peter provided valuable ground support while riding mule-back during the flight. WS Peter has spent 32 years protecting livestock in this area. Protection efforts will be ongoing.



We are pleased to announce the Lyon County trapping position has been filled. FA Mark Bentz was selected for the position and is currently learning his area and cooperators.

On May 11<sup>th</sup>, WS George Hansen was busy checking his trap line around several sheep bands in Lander County. During the inspection, WS Hansen removed three coyotes with the use of snares. WS Hansen reports occasional lamb losses, although there are likely more with the lamb bands spread out for many miles.

WS Hansen has been an expert trapper for over 30 years with the WS program.

WS Hansen will continue to provide protection efforts in his large work area.

On May 10<sup>th</sup>, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted a flight around a large lambing area in Washoe County. During the flight, four coyotes were removed. WS Doug Koepke provided valuable ground support during aerial operations. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

On May 15<sup>th</sup>, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted a flight around a large lambing area in Humboldt County. During the flight, two coyotes were removed and the aerial crew located one den which was removed. WS Peter provided valuable ground support during aerial operations. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

On May 16<sup>th</sup>, two large cattle and sheep producers in Douglas County reported that a lion had killed one calf and one sheep. The neighbors also reported an additional 10 sheep, one goat and one calf, total loss valued at \$1,700, had been killed by a lion in the past few months. The local residents also reported seeing a lion in the neighborhoods every week or so. DS Spencer inspected the fresh kills and determined that a male lion was responsible for the livestock losses. DS Spencer set a cage trap on the carcass of the sheep that evening and the following morning removed the lion. Several of the ranchers were on site and were extremely happy the lion was caught and their losses would end.



On May 19<sup>th</sup>, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted a flight around a large lambing area in Lander County which has experienced losses. During the flight, four coyotes were removed and one den located and later removed. Several of the coyotes were located in close proximity of the lamb bands. WS Hansen provided

valuable ground support during the flight. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted a flight around a large lambing area in Washoe County that has experienced losses. During the flight, five coyotes were removed and two dens were located and removed. Several of the coyotes were located in close proximity of the lamb bands. WS Koepke provided valuable ground support during the flight. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted a flight around a large lambing area in Humboldt County that has experienced losses. During the flight, four coyotes were removed. WS Peter provided valuable ground support while riding mule-back during the flight. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

On May 17<sup>th</sup>, WS Peter rode his mule around several lamb bands in Humboldt County and discovered where coyotes had killed three lambs (valued at \$318). WS Peter placed out some equipment and rode through the country trying to locate the coyotes. On the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup>, WS Peter used his decoy dogs to lure in one of the coyotes, which he promptly removed with his firearm. During the following week, WS Peter removed two additional coyotes with the use of a snares. WS Peter will continue to protect livestock in Humboldt County.

During the month of May, WS Miller placed DRC-1339 treated egg baits around several areas identified by NDOW for raven removal to protect sage-grouse nest and eggs. One area is a study being conducted by the US Geological Survey in collaboration with NDOW which includes structured surveys and videography with WS Miller applying direct control to remove the ravens. WS Miller recently finished protecting sage-grouse eggs and will now move to northern Washoe County (hunt unit 011-013) to protect translocated California big-horn sheep.

During the month of May, WS Rick Laffins maintained traps on an NDOW upland game protection project in Lyon County designed to protect turkey nests and eggs/poults from nest raiding predators such as coyotes, ravens, striped skunks, and raccoons, minks and feral cats. With the project completed at the end of May WS Laffins removed his camp and equipment. The coming months should indicate the success of the project as hopefully the turkeys will recruit this year's poults into the population. WS Laffins proved to be an extremely hard worker and a good trapper in a short amount of time, removing 22 coyotes, one striped skunk, one mink, two feral cats and 198 ravens from the wildlife management area despite rampant flooding. The Wildlife Management Area Manager will receive project results in the near future.



On Saturday May 27<sup>th</sup>, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an aerial operation around a population of antelope in Elko County (hunt unit 066). NDOW requested assistance to fly several antelope projects in northern Nevada to reduce the predation from coyotes. Antelope fawns are born around mid-May and research has shown that coyotes are a primary predator of antelope during their first six weeks of life. During the flight, nine coyotes were removed. Protection efforts will be ongoing for the next several weeks.

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. 422 birds from 30 species were dispersed from the airfield. One species of mammal and five species of birds were lethally removed. The increase in water throughout the area continues to show an increase in species diversity. As a matter of comparison, during May of 2016 WB Bowers dispersed 16 species of birds from the airfield as compared to 30 this May. With more water on the way, WB Bowers expects to be dealing with these conditions for the foreseeable future.

During the month of May, the remains of one horned lark were found on the airfield, no damage has been reported. With all of the wildlife activity in the area, the low number of incidents related to wildlife strikes is a good indicator of how effective a proactive integrated wildlife damage management approach can be. Mandatory online trainings, data transcription/entry, reports and surveys have all had to take a back seat to trying to keep the flight line clear of wildlife. WB Bowers is hopeful that funding will allow for some assistance and habitat modifications in the future.

During the month of May, WB Dean Pyzik reported four bird strikes at a military installation in southern Nevada. For Fiscal Year (FY) 17, there have been 19 bird strikes, this matches FY 16 at this time, but with one significant difference: FY 17 had no reportable damage.

Also during the reporting period, WB Pyzik remove 18 black-tailed jack rabbits from the installation while dispersing 771 birds. Of those 771 birds dispersed, mourning doves and great-tailed grackles accounted for 80% of the birds dispersed while patrolling and conducting perimeter checks. Removal of the rabbits not only directly reduces the chance of a wildlife strike to aircraft, but also indirectly reduces the chance by decreasing the presence of predatory wildlife.

During the month of May, WB Carl Frey attended the Part 139 training at the Oakland airport put on by several members of the California WS airport program. The training was packed with current and valuable information. The content will be used for training airport staff in NV.

WB Frey also continued the Wildlife Hazard Surveys at military installations in Lassen County, CA, and Douglas County, NV, during the reporting period. Day and night surveys were conducted at both locations. There



have been several species surveyed that haven't been seen in prior surveys. A total of 1,400 birds and mammals were surveyed throughout the month. WB Frey has also started running wildlife camera (picture) traps that allows for wildlife threats to be identified 24 hours a day. This approach has captured many animals missed with the point count surveys and further



shows movement patterns of species thought to not exhibit much nocturnal movement such as the above antelope facing the runway.

The spring has produced several sightings of a variety of young wildlife from antelope fawn, feral horse colts and these four red-tailed hawk fledglings being fed California ground squirrels that are being hunted by the adults on the airfield.



WB Frey assisted DoD at a facility in Washoe County with a nesting pair of common ravens that were leaving foreign object debris (FOD) in the Chinook Helicopters and damaging the hanger's outside flood lights.

WB Frey and WS Cameron Green received reports that there were several gulls struck by aircraft at a joint-use facility in Washoe County. In response, mitigation was performed on vacant lands around the airport where there gulls were attempting to nest. Specifically, WB Frey and WS Green increased efforts disturbing nesting areas by using a "pull-behind" drag to continually scatter nesting materials to prevent further nesting of the California gulls and using lethal removal to reinforce the non-lethal approaches being conducted on and off the airport property.



In addition to the above responses to protect aviation safety, WB Frey and WS Green harassed multiple other species using an array of non-lethal approaches. Species that became habituated/unresponsive to non-lethal approaches were removed lethally to encourage other wildlife to respond positively to non-lethal components.

### **New and Developing Methods**

Nothing to Report

### **Valuing and Investing in Employees**

During the reporting period, WB Pyzik won both the "57<sup>th</sup> Wing Category 2 Civilian of the Quarter" Jan- Mar award (left) and the "Category 2 Civilian of the Quarter Jan- Mar 57<sup>th</sup> Wing Staff Agencies" award.



WB Frey attended a CA-WS sponsored FAA Part 139 Airport training course during the month of May. The training was beneficial to the NV airport program in providing WB Frey with some new tools and approaches to provide the required training to airport personnel.

### **Information and Communication**

Nothing to Report

### **Emerging Trends/Issues**

Nothing to Report

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

Nothing to Report

### **Future Meeting and Events**

Friday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, N-4 grazing board meeting in Ely. State Director (SD) Mark Jensen and NDA MLS Jim Buhler to attend.

Tuesday, June 13<sup>th</sup>, N-3 Grazing Board meeting in Fallon. SD Jensen and DS Spencer to attend.

USDA APHIS

# Wildlife Services

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

