

September 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

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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 September, wildlife damage management work was conducted on an estimated **6.7** million acres of land under agreement. On these lands, WS personnel helped Nevada's farmers and ranchers protect over **\$166** million in agricultural resources such as cattle, sheep, and livestock feed; and over **\$6.5** million in natural resources. Additionally, WS assisted **226** persons and entities with technical assistance which involves providing information or equipment to cooperators so they can resolve problems themselves. Cooperators reported **\$941** in damage and WS Specialists verified **\$13,237** in damage to natural and agricultural resources. These losses would be much higher without an effective wildlife damage management program. During September, coyotes accounted for **\$10,522** in verified losses, mostly to livestock, and **441** 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 September, **57** samples were processed.

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



During the first two weeks of September, the Ely Crew Member (CM) confirmed the loss of two lambs, valued at \$300, to coyote predation. Each day, the Ely CM hiked into the remote band of sheep located between 10,000 and 11,000 feet in the mountains of central White Pine County. The Ely CM used traps to remove two coyotes, including a large male, near the kill sites. No further losses have been reported and the sheep producer was very pleased with the effort and results. Technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations was also provided to help prevent future losses.

On September 1st – 3rd CM Rowley, WS Crome, WB Moyles, and the Utah helicopter pilot responded to a request by NDOW to assist in an estray goat removal project in Elko County. The request was due to the close proximity of bighorn sheep and the chance of disease spreading between the estray goats and the bighorn sheep. The number of estray goats reported was 13. After two days of flying the aerial crew removed 10 estray goats. After extensive searching they feel confident that all the goats had been removed. Due to the remote location of the goats it was extremely difficult to collect all 10 disease samples. WB Moyles was able to get two samples, and submitted them to the Nevada Dept. of AG lab for testing. The results of the disease testing were negative for the pneumonia complex. The Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) was very happy with the outcome of this project. The Nevada program would like to thank the Utah program in the quick response on this project. It would have been very difficult to make this project a success without their assistance.



On September 6th, while checking equipment, Wildlife Specialist (WS) Hunter Bodenchuk observed a coyote near a band of sheep. WS Bodenchuk was able to remove the coyote with his firearm. When he walked over to confirm the kill and take a blood sample, he discovered that the coyote was in the process of killing a ewe sheep. The sheep was bloody but still alive. WS Bodenchuk went to the ranch and reported the injured sheep to the rancher who then recovered it. The rancher was very pleased with WS Bodenchuk's diligence.

On September 11th, Mountain Lion Specialist (MLS) Jim Buhler received a call concerning a problem with a mountain lion in Nye County. The following morning, MLS Buhler traveled to the remote ranch and confirmed the loss of five lambs, valued at \$875. MLS Buhler used eight of his well-trained hounds and his mule to trail the offending lion and eventually treed the lion about two miles from the kills. The lion was a 140 pound male, which was turned into the Ely NDOW office. No further losses have been recorded. The sheep producer was very pleased with the service provided by MLS Buhler and the Nevada Wildlife Services' program.

On September 12th, the East District office received a call concerning the loss of six calves and one lamb, valued at \$3,750. On September 15th, the Ely plane responded to the ranch in western White Pine County. During the morning's flight, the plane observed five coyotes near the kills and removed four. No further losses have been reported. The ranch will be monitored for future losses.

On September 13th, WS Mac Crome confirmed the loss of three lambs, valued at \$450 to coyote predation. WS Crome set several traps near the location of the kills. On September 21st, WS Crome trapped one large adult coyote near the location of the kills. No further losses have been reported and WS Crome continues to monitor the sheep in his assigned work area. WS Crome also provided technical assistance in the form of non-lethal recommendations to help prevent future losses.



During the early part of September, WS Scott Little was checking his equipment in southern

White Pine County and observed smoke in the distance. WS Little drove to the location and observed a power pole fire with no one in sight. WS Little was able to use his fire extinguisher to put out the fire. The local power company was notified and was very thankful for WS Little's efforts no doubt saving them money and preventing a possible range fire.



During the month of September, WS Randy Evans removed five coyotes on NDOW project 40. The project is located in Eureka and White Pine County and is designed to protect both mule deer and sage-grouse. WS Evans works both NDOW projects and livestock protection in his designated work area.

West District

On September 1st, a livestock producer from Churchill County reported two calves, valued at \$811.26, had been killed by coyote(s). WS Koepke inspected the situation and confirmed that the calves had been killed by a coyote. WS Koepke placed trail snares in the immediate area and two days later removed a large male coyote. No further livestock problems have been reported since the removal of the offending coyote. The livestock producer was extremely pleased with WS Koepke's protection efforts.

WS George Hansen spent September protecting lamb bands for sheep producers and calves for cattle producers in Lander County. On September 26th through September 29th, WS Hansen removed 11 coyotes with the use of foothold traps. During the fall months, coyotes really concentrate feeding efforts around calving areas because of food availability. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

During the month of September, WS Ben Miller inspected locations around bighorn sheep in northern Washoe County (hunt units 011 and 013). He recently found where a female lion moved into the area and killed two mule deer. WS Miller now has call boxes and trail snares placed in the area and if the lion comes back near the bighorn sheep, then it will be removed. WS Miller will continue to protect bighorn sheep on this NDOW project.



On September 6th WB Moyles and WS Green responded to a call from a local military installation regarding a raccoon in their aircraft.



After searching the plane and taking off a couple of body panels WB Moyles spotted the raccoon up in a portion of the inside of the wing. After about 15 minutes of wrestling the raccoon, WB Moyles and WS Green were able to remove the raccoon. Due to the circumstances, WB Moyles submitted the raccoon to the Washoe County health department for rabies testing. It was unclear if the raccoon had been on the plane for days or just overnight. The plane had recently come from the Georgia area where raccoon rabies is present. The results of the rabies test were negative.

On September 7th, Instructor Pilot (IP) Wes Gossard and CM Brandon VanderMay conducted an aerial operation around a large chicken ranch in Pershing County. The owners of the chicken ranch reported coyotes were coming in and killing free ranging chickens on a constant basis. During the aerial operation, 10 coyotes were removed. WS Koepke provided ground support. No further losses have occurred since the removal of the coyotes.



On September 8th, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an aerial operation around a sheep and cattle producer in Humboldt County. Twenty coyotes were removed to reduce future losses. WS Peter provided ground support. Protection efforts will be ongoing.

During September 12th-16th, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay flew around sheep and cattle in Humboldt and Pershing Counties, removing 70 coyotes to stop losses (including a group of eight). WS Peter and Koepke provided ground support.

On September 13th, WS Carl Frey worked around sheep and cattle operators in Lyon County inspecting equipment around livestock. WS Frey removed three offending coyotes with the use of M-44 devices. Livestock producers in Lyon County have been very pleased with the protection efforts WS Frey has provided since hired on just 10 months ago. DS Spencer is also pleased to have such a highly skilled ambitious worker as WS Frey.



On September 20th, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay conducted an aerial operation around several calving areas in Humboldt County

that have experienced historic losses, resulting in the removal of 39 coyotes in under three hours. WS Peter located a fair percentage of the coyotes for the aerial crew and directed the plane to the coyote's location. Protection efforts will be ongoing as fall calving is getting underway.

On September 23rd, DS Spencer conducted a routine field inspection with WS Koepke, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay in Humboldt County. During the inspection, DS Spencer checks for safety equipment and ensures employee are working within Wildlife Services policy guidelines. DS Spencer also assists in ground crew efforts and trap line inspections while in the field with employees. DS Spencer will continue to meet with employees and cooperators while in the field.

On September 26th – 28th, IP Gossard and CM VanderMay flew sheep and calving areas in Lander and Humboldt Counties to reduce ongoing and historic losses, resulting in the removal of 53 coyotes. WS's Hansen and Peter provided ground support.

On September 28th, WS Koepke inspected foothold traps he had set several days prior to reduce coyotes moving around some sheep bands in Humboldt County, resulting in the removal of six coyotes. WS Koepke will continue to protect livestock in his large work area.

On September 30th, DS Spencer conducted a field inspection with WS Peter in Humboldt County. WS Peter inspected several calves that had been reportedly killed by coyotes and provided ground crew duties. During the field inspection WS Peter and DS Spencer counted over 2,300 ravens in only the southern half of Paradise Valley while ground crewing. DS Spencer also received several nice comments about the protection efforts received from WS Peter and the aerial crew. DS Spencer will continue to conduct field inspections.



The West District aerial crew has been busy lately addressing requests for aerial hunting activities across western Nevada. Over the past year, the weather was generally decent for flying and the aerial crew flew over 428 hours while protecting sheep and cattle. The aerial crew will continue to provide excellent protection efforts and continues to be in demand.

During the month of September, Wildlife Biologist (WB) Hunter Moyles and WS Cameron Green continued protection work on an international airport in Reno. WB Moyles and WS Green work together on the airfield because it is a joint use facility. WS Green spends all of his time there, while WB Moyles is only there once or twice a week when he is not working on the other military installations. During the month, WB Moyles and WS Green continued to deter wildlife from using/crossing the airfield property. In an effort to deter these avian/mammalian species from crossing the airfield, WS Green utilized several methods of harassment. WB Green dispersed 564 birds and mammals from the airfield. Wildlife dispersed from the airfield included 12 species of birds and mammals. Many of these birds were congregated around a drainage ditch which holds water on a year around basis. Persistent harassment is necessary as birds and other wildlife are reluctant to leave the water source located on airport property.

Throughout the month WB Moyles and WS Green have seen an increase in bird of prey (raptor) presence on the airfields. During the month, three American kestrels and three Red-tailed hawks were captured and translocated. Raptor presence will continue to increase with the start of the fall migration.

Throughout the month of September, WB Moyles continued monthly surveys on offsite military drop zones and landing strips. During these surveys, WB Moyles observed 253 avian and mammalian species on his structured surveys. Surveys will continue to get a good baseline of wildlife presence and potential strike hazards to aircraft, which will determine the Integrated Wildlife Damage Management techniques he will deploy at the sites.

Along with several non-lethal harassment techniques, WB Moyles and WS Green also had to deploy some lethal means of control to eliminate aircraft strike potential at the above mentioned joint use facility. During the month, WB Moyles and WS Green removed several offending species for public safety including: 21 pigeons, seven mourning doves and five mallards by utilizing trapping and shooting. Aircraft protection methodology will continue to be employed at the large airport to better minimize the potential for animal and bird strikes to aircraft. Protection efforts are ongoing.



During the month of September, WB Dean Pyzik attended weekly meetings with the 57th Wing Flight Safety Officer and crew, where safety and the BASH program are discussed. While getting to know the military installation in Clark County, WB Pyzik came across a crawl under the fence line where coyotes have been accessing the perimeter. In response to the potential threat to aviation safety and pets, WB Pyzik removed a coyote at the crawl with a snare.

In response to excessive abundance of Mourning doves and other species not listed on the current migratory depredation permit, WB Pyzik requested and received an amendment to allow for more lethal and non-lethal take, which will help considerably during the fall migration.

New and Developing Methods

Nothing to Report.

Valuing and Investing in Employees

WB Pyzik received a safety award from USDA APHIS WS New York for assisting with the rescue of an injured Wildlife Services employee on June 29, 2016.



During the month of September, WS Green continued work at a joint-use airport in Reno. WS Green spent a considerable amount of time trapping and translocating hawks (including his first re-capture), accipiters and falcons (raptors) to prevent them from occupying the same space and time as aircraft. WS Green has been a quick study, working with WB Moyles, they have modified noose carpets, bal-chatris, combined the two trapping systems and are working on different applications of V-top style traps. DS Spencer also worked with WS Green on using foot-hold traps and snares. During the month, WS Green, completed

a ground squirrel removal project to reduce the airport's attractiveness to resident and migrating raptors. WS Green will continue to develop and address human health and safety concerns at the airport.

Information and Communication



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Wildlife Services Protects Agriculture and Natural Resources

Recently, several news outlets have highlighted a university study that calls into question the validity of USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services' predation damage management and research, particularly the program's use of lethal methods. On September 18, The New York Times posted an article highlighting the study and criticizing the program's work to protect agriculture and natural resources from wildlife damage.

Wildlife Services would like to set the record straight and provide our stakeholders with additional information that was left out of The New York Times article by the author, as well as our response to The New York Times editor before it was shortened by the paper. We take these criticisms seriously and believe the public has the right to know the complete story. As we mention in the letter, Wildlife Services welcomes open, complete and contextually accurate discussion of best management practices in its efforts to provide responsible wildlife damage management.

Letter Submitted to The New York Times

The New York Times
Letter to the Editor

Dear Mr. Feyer,

We appreciate The New York Times Editorial Board allowing us to comment on the recent opinion piece by Mr. Richard Conniff titled "America's Wildlife Body Count." APHIS Wildlife Services stands by our employees and their research, management, and communication activities to protect American agriculture, property, human health and safety, and natural resources.

In his article, Mr. Conniff did not include information provided by Wildlife Services that puts management action in perspective. In 2015, Wildlife Services removed 3.2 million wild animals, of which 1.5 million were invasive and injurious species, such as feral swine and European starlings. Mr. Conniff also failed to mention that Wildlife Services' non-lethal actions comprised the majority of Wildlife Services damage management efforts with more than 21 million animals being dispersed in 2015.

The opinion piece asks for transparency for taxpayers, yet cites the very data from the Wildlife Services' public website. Wildlife Services has annually published program data reports online for the past two decades. These publically available reports include the number of animals dispersed and removed in each state, the methods used and the resources being protected. An example of that data shows that Sandhill Cranes were reported and observed in hundreds of instances harming crops (including corn, wheat, alfalfa and chili peppers) and threatening human safety in airport situations. In response, Wildlife Services dispersed 149,000 cranes and lethally removed 17. Most importantly in 2015, USDA's Office of Inspector General completed an audit of the Wildlife Services program and found it to be in compliance with all applicable Federal and State laws, and did not identify any problems with our wildlife damage management activities. Wildlife Services works closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and State wildlife agencies and is strongly supported by the professional wildlife management community.

Wildlife management utilizes a variety of methods. The Wildlife Society (TWS), whose 10,000 members include scientists, managers, educators and others, in their [TWS's Standing Position Statement on Wildlife Damage Management](#) states, "Prevention or control of wildlife damage, which often includes removal of the animals responsible for the damage, is an essential and responsible part of wildlife management." Mr. Conniff's absolute support of Dr. Adrian Treves' article regarding predator research does not consider the hundreds of practicing wildlife experts, researchers, or managers. Treves et al.'s selective assessment of existing North American and European predation studies, including those of our own scientists, did not accurately interpret or represent the studies' designs and results. Moreover, Treves et al. selectively disregarded studies from Australia where numerous controlled field experiments have been conducted regarding the effects and impacts of lethal predator management. An objective critique of the science underlying wildlife management is welcomed, however, Mr. Conniff's opinion piece and the Treves et al. article have not fulfilled that goal. While disappointed in these efforts, Wildlife Services welcomes open, complete, and contextually accurate discussion of best management practices in its efforts to provide responsible wildlife damage management.

Kevin Shea, Administrator
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

To view the edited and posted version of the letter by The New York Times, please visit [The New York Times Opinion page](#).



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Emerging Trends/Issues

Nevada predator damage management settlement agreement

Recently, a federal court approved a settlement agreement between WildEarth Guardians and U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Wildlife Services program.

In the agreement, Wildlife Services agreed to perform a new analysis of the environmental impacts of its predator damage management activities in Nevada; that analysis has already begun. Wildlife Services agreed to stop predator damage management work in Nevada's Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas, unless there is a threat to health and human safety, until a new analysis is complete.

When complete, the new analysis will replace Wildlife Services-Nevada's 2011 Environmental Assessment (EA) and the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) from that EA. The 2011 EA has been, and continues to be, the primary National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) coverage for Wildlife Services to conduct predator damage management in Nevada. The 2011 EA and FONSI do not tier to the 1994 Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) and 1995 Record of Decision, though they did sometimes reference it. The agreement provides that Wildlife Services may rely on the 2011 EA and FONSI for Nevada predator damage management activities outside of the designated Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas until the new analysis is complete.

Additionally, Wildlife Services posted, per the agreement, a public notice on the program's NEPA website stating no new Wildlife Services NEPA documents will be tiered to the 1994 PEIS, and in the future, Wildlife Services intends to revise or redo all of its NEPA documents that are currently tiered to the 1994 PEIS. Also per the agreement, an email was sent out to Wildlife Services staff members with the notice.

The settlement agreement does not represent an admission by any party to any fact, claim, or defense concerning any issue in this case. Wildlife Services complies with all applicable Federal, State and local laws and is dedicated to resolving human and wildlife conflicts with the most up-to-date information and best scientific analysis available.

Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights (EEO/CR)

Nothing to Report

Future Meetings and Events

Oct 3rd. N-6 Grazing board meeting. DS Bennett and Staff Biologist (SB) Jack Sengl to attend.



USDA APHIS

Wildlife Services



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