

# WDFW seeks panel to review wolf-caused losses

Livestock and wildlife experts sought

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

Washington wildlife officials are recruiting livestock experts and conservationists to advise the state on compensating ranchers for lost production caused by wolves.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife plans to appoint up to five volunteers to serve on the new committee.

The panel will review WDFW's approval or denial of claims for reduced weight gain, low pregnancy rates and higher-than-normal losses.

The department will make the final call on payments, but the panel will bring additional expertise and transparency to the process, WDFW wolf policy coordinator Donny Martorello said.

He said WDFW wants a variety of viewpoints represented. "Diversity is important. If it were all like-minded people, we'd need only one person," he said.

WDFW pays ranchers the market value for livestock killed by wolves. The state's wolf recovery plan also calls for WDFW to develop a system to compensate ranchers for livestock losses where there is no direct evidence wolves caused the damage.

Martorello said WDFW has not made any payments for indirect losses, but two ranchers have filed claims.

Volunteers will serve staggered one- or two-year terms. The committee may start meeting as early as mid-November and will likely meet about four times a year, according to WDFW.

Committee members will be reimbursed for travel expenses.



Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

A Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife file photo shows a member of the Teanaway wolf pack. Washington wildlife officials are recruiting livestock experts and conservationists to advise the state on compensating ranchers for lost production caused by wolves.

# Wolf shooting probed in Columbia County

Predator activities increasing in portions of state

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

A lone wolf that had been fitted with a radio collar in Oregon was shot and killed in Columbia County by a man who said he was protecting his dogs, according to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

WDFW is investing the shooting, which occurred after dark Oct. 11 on Eckler Mountain in the Blue Mountains. The resident reported the incident, WDFW Capt. Dan Rahn said.

Rahn said Monday that WDFW investigators were working on a report to submit to the Columbia County Prosecutor's Office. Wolves are a state endangered species in southeast Washington. Harming a state-protected animal is a gross misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in jail and a \$5,000 fine.

"People still have the right to protect their property, but it has to be under the right circumstances and that's what we're investigating," Rahn said. "This is a priority to get it done."

The Blue Mountains straddle the Washington-Oregon border. Both states have documented wolf packs and lone wolves in the region. A WDFW weekly summary of wolf activities in late September reported that a collared male wolf from Oregon was "spooking" cattle on Eckler Mountain. The shooter was apparently not a livestock producer, Rahn said.

At least three other wolves have been killed or injured in shooting incidents in Washington in the past year.

A wolf was shot and killed Oct. 12, 2014, in Whitman County in southeast Washington. A resident was charged with taking an endangered species. The prosecutor's office dropped the charge after the defendant agreed to pay \$100 for administrative costs.

# Industry responds to 'Toxic Taters' campaign

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

A small group of Minnesota residents concerned about possible health effects of living near potato fields is waging a campaign against spuds, with financial backing from a national organization that opposes pesticide use.

Toxic Taters, which uses the Pesticide Action Network's nonprofit status for fundraising, has protested McDonald's restaurants and a large Minnesota farm, R.D. Offutt.

Industry sources note Offutt is among the most environmentally progressive farms in the country and say the protesters are making an emotional appeal devoid of facts.

Toxic Taters coordinator Amy Mondloch said the organization, which has about 15 core members, organized 40 protests of McDonald's restaurants throughout the country on Oct. 6 and has obtained 30,000 signatures on petitions asking McDonald's to demand reduced pesticide use from its suppliers.

In an email to Capital Press, McDonald's responded, "As part of our 2009 commitment, we require a comprehensive audit of U.S. potato growers annually to identify best practices in pesticide reduction, as well as water and fertilizer use."

American Falls, Idaho, grower Jim Tiede, the incoming National Potato Council president, said growers limit their pesticide use by necessity to cut costs. Tiede follows a University of Idaho pesticide management plan to streamline chemical use. Tiede noted NPC has spearheaded development of a farm sustainability program, driven



Courtesy of Toxic Taters

Toxic Taters supporters protest a Minnesota McDonald's restaurant on Oct. 6. The group opposes pesticide use and believes more studies of health impacts on homes near farm fields should be conducted. Industry sources counter that the group is making an emotional appeal to support its agenda.

by customer demands. McDonald's is helping to develop the plan, Tiede said.

Tiede emphasized that farmers' families live by their fields, and chemical application guidelines are strict. He believes the industry should respond to such "scare tactics."

"It's a lot of innuendos and not-quite truths to scare consumers not to buy potatoes," Tiede said. "In the big picture, I think it hurts the image of the potato."

Current NPC President Dan Lake, of Ronan, Mont., said ever-tightening regulations have driven the industry to continually implement more environmentally sound practices and products. Within the next decade, Lake predicts the industry will utilize more biological products.

Lake said the industry responds to emotional appeals, such as "Toxic Taters," by looking at the "science side of things."

Rupert, Idaho, potato researcher Jeff Miller said potato residue levels are safe, and any claim to the contrary is irresponsible. But he acknowledges fry buyers could further limit chemical use by sourcing new spud varieties with improved pest and disease resistance.

Mondloch said Toxic Taters has requested data on the Offutt and McDonald's sustainability plans, a list of chemicals applied by Offutt and funding for studies on health impacts of homes near farms.

R.D. Offutt officials emphasized environmental milestones highlighted on the company website,

including reducing phosphorus by 40 percent and nitrogen by 10 percent on its Park Rapids, Minn., farm, planting 2,500 acres of trees as drift buffers, cutting tillage in half through precision agriculture, water savings through high-tech irrigation methods and minimized leaching with slow-release fertilizer.

PAN has provided Toxic Taters members with equipment to test for drift in their yards. In general, PAN advocates for stricter Environmental Protection Agency risk-assessment guidelines for pesticides relying on less industry-generated data, the phasing out of certain restricted pesticides and more analysis of long-term health impacts of low pesticide doses, said PAN official Lex Horan.

# AgWeatherNet director leaving Washington State University

Washington State University is looking for a new leader for AgWeatherNet.

Gerrit Hoogenboom, director since 2010, will take a position at the University of Florida beginning Jan. 1, according to a WSU press release.

AgWeatherNet is an automated agricultural weather



Hoogenboom

station network that provides current and historical weather data and a range of models and decision aids that farmers can use.

Gary Grove, director of the

Online  
<http://weather.wsu.edu>

WSU Irrigated Agriculture Research and Extension Center, will be interim director of AgWeatherNet. Melba Salazar will become interim leader of AgWeatherNet's research

program. WSU will begin the search for a director in 2016.

"Under (Hoogenboom's) leadership, AgWeatherNet expanded significantly and developed several important decision models and push technologies," said Rich Koenig, director of WSU Extension, in the press release.

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