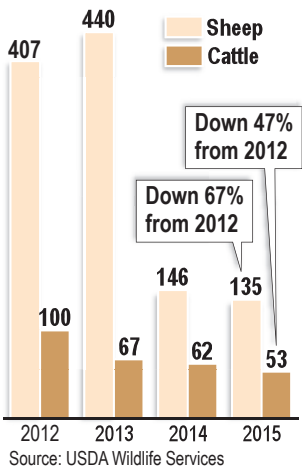


## Wolves

## Idaho wolf depredations continue downward trend

## Idaho wolf depredations on livestock

(Fiscal years ending Sept. 30)



By JOHN O'CONNELL

Capital Press

BOISE — Reported wolf attacks on Idaho livestock continued declining in 2015, according to new numbers from USDA Wildlife Services.

The Cascade area was the lone exception to the trend, and Todd Grimm, Idaho's Wildlife Services director, who plans to use a helicopter this winter to radio collar wolves in the area.

During fiscal year 2015, which ended on Sept. 30, the agency conducted 91 wolf depredation investigations of varying scope, down from 107 during the prior fiscal year and 129 in FY 2013. The number of investigations peaked in 2009 at 219.

"They've been trending

down for a while, and this trend continued this year," Grimm said.

Confirmed and probable wolf-caused livestock deaths have also been dropping. Grimm said there were 53 cattle deaths in FY 2015, down from 62 in FY 2014, 67 in FY 2013 and 100 in FY 2012. There were 135 sheep deaths attributed to wolves in FY 2015, down from 146 in FY 2014, 440 in FY 2013 and 407 in FY 2012.

Ranching industry leaders attribute the declines to more liberal Idaho hunting and trapping regulations and heightened attention on management since federal protection for wolves ended.

"We've got a hunting season going," said Stan Boyd,

executive director of Idaho Wool Growers. "Finally, the state is managing its wolf population."

Grimm's department removed 70 wolves during FY 2015, up 17 wolves from the prior year.

Though five wolves were destroyed near Cascade, the area's wolves remained bold this summer in the face of human activity, killing nine cattle, Grimm said. Grimm plans to commence with radio collaring efforts there as soon as there's blue sky and snow to track foot prints.

"We spent a lot of resources flying, looking for un-collared animals (last summer)," Grimm said. "That wasn't very productive."

Wolves killed seven cat-

tle owned by Cascade-area rancher Phil Davis, and didn't bother to feed on the carcasses. Davis fears wolf attacks often go undetected by ranchers, as livestock die slowly from hidden wounds.

"Most often, animals are intact, and they look like they could have died from 100 different things," Davis said.

Emmett sheep rancher John Peterson hadn't lost an animal since 2013, when Wildlife Services removed a troublesome wolf pack. During an Aug. 6 wolf attack, however, Peterson lost 54 head, the most of any rancher during FY 2015. Nonetheless he's encouraged there are no longer wolf dens near his grazing territory, and big game numbers appear on the rise.

John Beals, project manager with the Governor's Office of Species Conservation, said ranchers should apply for compensation for FY 2015 wolf losses by Jan. 31, 2016. He said there's ample funding for the last fiscal year, and his office recently received \$100,000 in federal funding to cover FY 2016.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game, which monitors wolves for wildlife, also has ample wolf-management funding — roughly \$400,000 — due to a surge in tax revenue from gun and ammunition sales, said staff biologist Jim Hayden. For the year, Hayden said the state's wolf hunters and trappers are on pace to equal the 250 wolves they harvested last year.

## No charge filed in E. Wash. wolf shooting

## Conviction unlikely, prosecutor says

By DON JENKINS

Capital Press

An Eastern Washington man who shot and killed a wolf Oct. 11 won't be charged, the Columbia County Prosecutor's Office announced Tuesday.

The man fired from his front porch and later told Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife officers that he feared for the safety of his wife and dogs. Prosecutors were "highly unlikely" to gain a conviction and an acquittal may have encouraged "open season" on the state-protected species, according to a memorandum from Deputy Prosecuting Attorney C. Dale Slack.

The shooter's "demeanor and behavior" suggested his only motive was to protect his pets and family, according to Slack. "Whether the fear was reasonable is debatable, but it appears the fear was real to him and will come across as such before a jury," Slack wrote.

Wolves in the most eastern one-third of Washington have been removed from the



OR-14, shown when he was fitted with a collar in 2012 by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, was shot and killed Oct. 11 by a Columbia County, Wash., resident. The Columbia County Prosecutor's Office announced Tuesday that the man won't be charged.

federal endangered species list, but they remain on the state's endangered species list. Taking a state-protected species is a gross misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in jail and a \$5,000 fine.

Columbia County Prosecutor Rea Culwell said the shooting presented a much different set of facts than one in October 2014 in Whitman County, also in southeast Washington.

In that case, a man pursued

a wolf in his pickup and shot the animal in a wheat field. The man was charged, but the case was dropped after he agreed to pay \$100 in court costs, an outcome criticized by some wolf advocates. Although the wolf was not an immediate threat to humans or animals, Whitman County Prosecutor Denis Tracy said the wolf's presence raised legitimate public-safety concerns.

In Columbia County, a Blue Mountains resident re-

ported that he shot at a wolf 10 times with a .22-caliber rifle, with the fatal shot hitting the skull and dropping the animal 43 yards from the cabin, according to WDFW.

The male wolf had been collared more than three years ago by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and was known as OR-14.

When it was killed, it was underweight, separated from its pack and suffering from an infection. Old wounds included birdshot pellets to the

wolf's head.

The wolf's hunger, age and poor health could have made the animal unpredictable and less afraid of humans, Slack stated.

"This is not a compelling and powerful 'test case' that will send a message with a win, but a loss will definitely send a message that Columbia County juries won't convict a wolf shooter," according to Slack.

Conservation Northwest Executive Director Mitch Friedman said he agreed with the prosecutor's reasoning, though he said he remains concerned about a pattern of wolf shootings.

Besides the wolves shot in Whitman and Columbia counties, a wolf was shot and killed in October 2014 in Kintitas County in Central Washington.

Conservation groups have put up a \$20,000 reward for information leading to a conviction. No arrests have been made.

A wolf hit and killed by a vehicle on Interstate 90 in eastern King County in April was healing from a gunshot wound to a rear leg. She was the first gray wolf known to venture west of the Cascades in decades.



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife The male wolf, OR 22, is pictured walking through a Northeast Oregon forest on Jan. 26. A Baker City, Ore., man who reported he shot the wolf now faces criminal charges.

## Oregon man who shot wolf faces criminal charges

By ERIC MORTENSON

Capital Press

An Eastern Oregon man who told state police and wildlife officials that he'd shot a wolf while hunting coyotes on private property in Grant County has been charged with killing an endangered species.

Brennon D. Witty, 25, also was charged with hunting with a centerfire rifle without a big game tag, Harney County District Attorney Tim Colahan said Nov. 16. Both charges are Class A misdemeanors, each punishable by up to a year in jail and a \$6,250 fine. Witty will be arraigned Dec. 2 in Grant County Justice Court, Canyon City.

The shooting happened in Grant County; the neighboring Harney County DA handled it as a courtesy because his Grant County counterpart was acquainted with the hunter's family and wanted to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest.

The incident happened Oct. 6, when Witty voluntarily notified ODFW and Oregon State Police that he'd shot a wolf while hunting coyotes on private property south of Prairie City. Police recovered a wolf's body on the property.

Oregon's action to remove wolves from the state endangered species list has no apparent bearing on the case. Wolves were listed under the state Endangered Species Act at the time of the shooting; the ODFW Commission on Nov. 9 removed wolves from the state list. Regardless, they remained on the federal endangered species list in the western two-thirds of the state.

The wolf was identified as OR-22, a male that has worn a GPS tracking collar since October 2013 and dispersed from the Umatilla Pack in February 2015. He was in Malheur County for awhile, then traveled into Grant County. Wildlife biologists don't believe he had a mate of pups. Young or sub-dominant wolves often leave their home packs to establish their own territory and find mates.

OR-22 was the third Oregon wolf known to have died since August, when the Sled Springs pair in Northeast Oregon were found dead of unknown cause. The state now has a minimum of 82 wolves.

## Deer and elk serve as a buffer to livestock attacks

By ERIC MORTENSON

Capital Press

They weren't on the agenda when the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Commission voted Nov. 9 to take wolves off the state's endangered species list, but Oregon's elk and deer population likely will be key factors in wolf management decisions in the years ahead.

Mark Henjum, a retired wildlife biologist who was ODFW's original wolf program coordinator, said healthy deer and elk populations are a buffer between livestock and the state's increasing number of predators.

Oregon has 25,000 to



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife The wolf OR-7 walks in the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest in southwest Oregon.

30,000 black bears, an estimated 6,200 cougars and a minimum of 82 wolves, according to ODFW.

Biologists fully expect the

state's wolf population to continue growing. Wolves occupy only 12 percent of their potential range in the state, and continued dispersal from Northeast Oregon will put them in contact with elk and deer and possibly in competition with other predators. Bear and cougar are much more widely dispersed in the state.

Sharp, localized drops in ungulate prey, as deer and elk are known, could drive predators to attack sheep, cattle or other domestic animals, Henjum and other biologists say.

Bears are primarily omnivorous but will take young deer and elk, especially in the spring. Cougars, meanwhile, are solitary ambush hunters and

can take just about any animal at will, Henjum said. "They're amazingly good at what they do," he said.

Wolves travel in packs and chase down prey. They can kill solitary adult cougars, or females and kittens, and chase cougars off carcasses. Pressure from wolves can force cougars into steeper, brushier terrain. The competition for ungulate prey could produce a bad turn for livestock.

Biologists say wolves prefer elk, but attacks on livestock are what anger cattle and sheep producers and gain media attention. From 2009 through June 2015, Oregon's confirmed losses to wolves stood at 79 sheep, 37 cattle, two goats and two herd protection dogs. Ranchers believe wolves are responsible for much more damage, saying livestock often disappear in wolf country. In addition, many livestock attacks are written off as "probable" or "possible"

wolf depredations.

"This buffer thing is one of the main reasons we haven't seen so high a rate of loss of livestock," Henjum said. "I think down the road, trying to maintain the ungulate populations is something that's going to be more important as we move on."

Although wolves were taken off the state endangered species list, their existence in Oregon is still governed by a wolf management plan. Hunting and trapping are not allowed, and there's no sport season for wolves. The plan does allow "controlled take" of wolves in cases of chronic livestock attacks or decreases in prey.

Phase 3 of the wolf plan, the next step after delisting, calls for wolves to be managed "in concert with its wild prey base," a move strongly supported by groups such as the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. "Oregon's wolf population is rapidly approaching the point where human tolerance and unacceptable impacts upon the wolf's deer and elk prey base must be addressed," the foundation said in a letter to the ODFW Commission.

Jerome Rosa, executive director of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, said his organization's members report seeing fewer deer and elk in some areas, and more in others.

## LEGAL

PURSUANT TO ORS CHAPTER 87 Notice is hereby given that the following vehicle will be sold, for cash to the highest bidder, on 12/1/2015. The sale will be held at 10:00 am by MERCEDES BENZ OF SALEM 2405 COMMERCIAL ST SE, SALEM, OR 2000 Mercedes S430 VIN=WDBNG70J8YA105487 Amount due on lien \$2,788.08 Reputed owner(s) Cynthia Moore Cynthia Moore

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