

Wolves

Officials pleased with wolf depredation's downward trend



Courtesy of Colville National Forest

Cows graze in the Colville National Forest in northeastern Washington. Some ranchers are cutting short the grazing season in the national forest to avoid conflicts with wolves.

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

BOISE — An official involved in controlling problem wolves believes livestock depredations have reached a low point and should stay there, showing that Idaho wolf programs are on the right trajectory following the recent end of federal involvement.

In Fiscal Year 2013, Todd Grimm, director of Idaho Wildlife Services, said his office killed 78 wolves, all due to reports of livestock depredation. In Fiscal Year 2016, which ended Oct. 1, his office killed 70 wolves, 50 of which were tied to livestock depredations. The recent numbers were about the same as during FY 2015.

Once numbers are tabulated on total depredations, Grimm expects to see a slight drop from the previous year. Grimm believes depredation cases have now gotten about as low as they're going to get, and the state experienced no "really big kills anywhere and didn't have any super hot spots."

"I think this is what we can expect



Courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Idaho wildlife managers say a reduction in wolf depredations in that state shows their wolf program is on the right track.

unless some other dynamic changes," Grimm said. "We seem to be getting to a management level where there's always going to be losses, but we're doing our best to minimize those losses as much as we can."

Dustin Miller, administrator with the Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation, believes the state has greater flexibility and should manage wolves more effectively and efficiently, having crossed a five-year post-delisting management threshold in May. Before achieving that milestone, the federal government

held the state to rigorous monitoring and recovery requirements, he said.

"We've got the ability to act quickly to depredations as they arise," Miller said. "We don't have the federal government calling the shots or looking over our shoulder any more."

In recent years, Miller's office has covered ranchers' wolf depredations at full market value, through a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service program that divvies up \$1 million among states where wolf kills occur. Half of that funding goes toward preventive programs, and Miller said a couple of Idaho cattle ranchers have used it to add range riders, with good results.

Jim Hayden, staff biologist with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, believes his agency is now free to pursue more "biologically meaningful" work following the end of federal oversight. Hayden explained IDFG was required to use "outdated" monitoring techniques, such as collaring animals, and had to make pack size estimates during mid-winter, rather than at the start of wolf breeding season.

Profanity Peak pack attacks another calf as hunt continues

Washington rancher says: 'Everybody's having problems'

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Washington wildlife managers have confirmed that a calf found this week on private land was injured by the diminished Profanity Peak wolf pack, a sign depredations will continue until the entire pack is eliminated, according to the state Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The injured calf, found last week, was at least the 10th bovine attacked by the pack this summer, according to WDFW. The department concluded five other cattle were probably attacked by the pack.

WDFW has shot seven wolves in the pack since Aug. 5, leaving at least one adult female and three pups. The last shooting was Sept. 29.

Citing continuing policy considerations, WDFW wolf policy coordinator Donny Martorello reaffirmed that the department plans to eliminate the entire pack.

"Given this pattern, we do not believe recent lethal removals are likely to achieve the goal of stopping depredations in the near future," he said in an email.

Also Thursday, Martorello reported that WDFW investigators determined Sunday that the Dirty Shirt pack had injured a cow on a state Department of Natural Resources grazing allotment.

Martorello said the rancher turned out livestock June 5. Because of the depredation, the producer is moving the livestock off the allotment, he said.

The attack was the first confirmed depredation this year by the Dirty Shirt pack. WDFW considers culling a pack after four confirmed depredations. Only the Profanity Peak has reached that threshold this year.

Although WDFW says it intends to remove the pack — an operation that has outraged some environmental groups — frustration remains high among some ranchers in northeastern Washington, said Stevens County rancher Scott Nielsen, vice president of the Cattle Producers of Washington.

Conflicts between livestock and wolves are escalating, and WDFW's official depredation tally reflects only a fraction of the losses in Stevens, Ferry and Pend Oreille counties, he said.

Losses may come into sharper focus when the grazing season on public land is over at the end of October.

"There are a lot of people worried about what they're going to get when they bring (cattle) in," Nielsen said. "I wouldn't be surprised that if in this tri-county area there were 200 livestock missing or bitten."

"Last year, we hardly had any problems," he said. "Everybody is having problems up here this year."

Ferry County rancher Aron Scotten said Friday he will move his cows from the Colville National Forest over the next week to avoid conflicts with wolves. That's two weeks earlier than usual.

"We're trying to get cattle off the allotment, and what

we're finding are the injured calves that we weren't necessarily finding before," he said.

He said he expects calves to be thinner and fewer cows to be pregnant because they have been harassed by wolves.

"They became habituated to beef, and everywhere we moved cattle, they would follow," Scotten said.

National Forest spokesman Franklin Pemberton said he knows of at least one other rancher who plans to bring in his cows early.

The Forest Service and ranchers have tried all summer to adjust grazing plans to create space between cattle and wolves, he said.

"It was a little more intensive this year than last," Pemberton said. "The number of wolves goes up every year."

Scotten said he's concerned that wolves will follow his cattle out of the national forest.

"With this situation, the way it is, when we bring them home, we'll be doing daily checks," Scotten said.

Ending the grazing season early will lead to spending more money on hay this winter, he said.

Scotten said he plans to feed his cows closer to his house this winter and install lights in calving pens.

"We're trying our best to do our part," he said. "Everything we do literally has to change. We have to rethink every aspect of how we produce cattle."

Wolves, possibly from OR-7's pack, kill 2 calves in S. Oregon

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Wolves killed and ate most of two calves and badly injured a third in an attack that happened on private land frequented by the pack formed by Oregon's best known wolf, OR-7.

Whether the Rogue Pack was involved is uncertain, because no pack members wear tracking collars, but the Wood River Valley in Southern Oregon's Klamath County is part of the territory the pack uses, according to Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. A federal biologist, John Stephenson, added that other wolves use that area as well.

If it turns out Rogue Pack members were responsible, it would be their first known attack on livestock, said Stephenson, who works for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "They've had a good record," he said.

Two calves, one about 800 pounds and the other estimat-

ed at 600 pounds, were found dead and mostly consumed Oct. 5. An employee of the livestock operation told investigators he saw three wolves feeding on one of the calves.

A third calf, about 300 pounds, was found alive with bite wounds on all four legs, according to an ODFW report.

Stephenson said the cow herd is scheduled to be moved from the area in a couple weeks, and wildlife officials hope to keep them safe until then.

The Rogue Pack's alpha male, OR-7, became well known when he dispersed from northeast Oregon's Imnaha pack in September 2011. He wandered across the state and into California, becoming the first wolf known to have entered that state since 1924.

After traveling more than 1,000 miles in zig-zag fashion, he settled in the Southern Oregon Cascades and in 2014 found a mate, an unknown female. They've since had three litters of pups.

ODFW Commission begins review of wolf, cougar management plans

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Oregon wildlife officials are beginning required reviews of the way they manage wolves and cougars, while researchers are continuing to study how the two predators interact.

Information on the review process was scheduled to be presented to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Commission at its meeting Oct. 6-7 in La Grande.

In the background is an intriguing study, now in its third year, on wolf-cougar interaction in the Mount Emily Wildlife Unit of the Blue Mountains outside the city.

Cougars and wolves compete for the same prey, primarily deer and elk. Cougars far outnumber wolves in Oregon — the state has an estimated 6,000 cougars and a minimum of 110 wolves — but are thought to be at a disadvantage because they are solitary animals while wolves



Wash. Department of Fish and Wildlife
Oregon researchers are in the third year of a study on wolf-cougar interaction in the Mount Emily Wildlife Unit of the Blue Mountains near La Grande.

hunt in packs.

From July 2014 through January 2016, ODFW and Oregon State University researchers documented 16 cases of direct and indirect wolf-cougar interaction in the Mount Emily management unit, according to research material. The majority of the interactions involved wolves scavenging prey that cougars had killed and hidden in caches, as they are called.

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MEETING TOPICS

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Limagrain Cereal Seeds
Syngenta
University of Idaho
Washington State University
Oregon State University
- **WSU Extension Cereal Variety Testing Program and Oregon Elite Yield Trial updates and results**
Ryan Higginbotham and Mike Flowers
- **WSDA Seed Lab Advisory Meeting**
- **WSCIA General Membership Meeting**
This is just a small portion of the agenda, with more topics being added each day. Pesticide credits are being applied for.

SPEAKERS

- **Dr. Drew Lyon**
WSU Weed Scientist, will present on management of noxious weeds.
- **Dr. Randy Fortenbery**
WSU Wheat & Small Grains Economist, will speak on the value of wheat in Washington
- **Dr. Camille Steber**
from the USDA-ARS Wheat Genetics, Quality, Physiology and Disease Research Unit will present on the science of falling numbers.

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