

# Wolves kill calf; rancher rethinks grazing plan

Another depredation in NE Washington

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

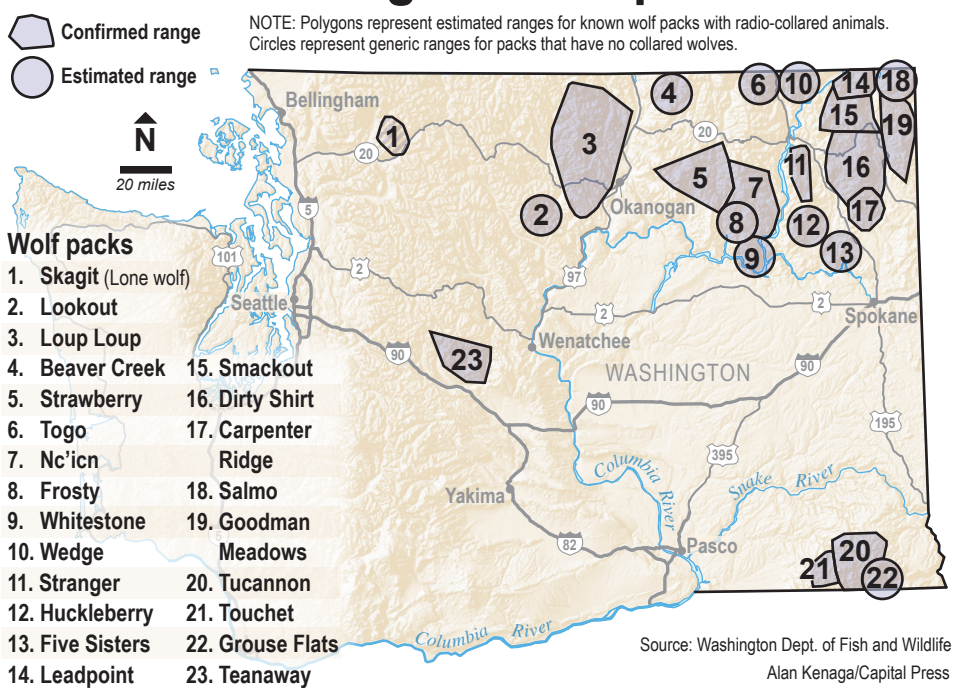
A northeast Washington rancher says he may quit a U.S. Forest Service grazing allotment that he's had since the 1980s after wolves killed one of his calves Sunday in northern Ferry County.

Ron Eslick, 71, said the Black Angus calf, a week and a half old, was the first animal he's lost to wolves, as far as he knows. He said he will look into grazing on private pastures this summer rather than risk losing more livestock on an open range.

"It's been a perfect range," Eslick said. "I don't want to give it up, but I'm not going to feed the wolves."

Several sources said the Department of Fish and Wildlife confirmed that the calf was killed by wolves. The department did not re-

## Known Washington wolf packs (As of Dec. 31, 2017)



spond to requests for details and confirmation.

It's unclear which wolf pack attacked the calf, though the herd was close to the Togo pack's territory in northern Ferry County. Togo

was one of four new packs identified by Fish and Wildlife in 2017. It has not been officially blamed for any previous depredations.

Eslick has a permit to graze cattle on the Jasper

allotment in the Colville National Forest.

Eslick said a neighbor saw the wolf over the calf. The wolf left, leaving the partially eaten carcass.

"A lot of the quarters

were eaten off," he said. "If we had come two hours later, it would have been eaten and nobody would have known anything about it."

Eslick said the calf was killed about 600 yards from his brother's home and was found on federal land just inside the boundary with private land north of Orient, an unincorporated community that borders Stevens County.

Eslick said officials suggested he could put flashing lights on the 1,300-acre allotment to prevent wolf attacks. He said he's checking on the condition of fences on pastures about 12 miles away.

Fish and Wildlife has adopted a policy of releasing information about wolf attacks on its own delayed schedule.

"I don't think WDFW has a lot of interest in telling people what's happening up here," Cattle Producers of Washington President Scott Nielsen said. "There's been less information, and it's getting progressively worse."

# Agriculture weighs in on farm bill failure

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

Agriculture groups had mixed reactions to the defeat Friday of the farm bill. The massive legislation failed by a 213-198 vote on the U.S. House floor.

House Agriculture Committee Chairman K. Michael Conaway called it a temporary setback.

"We may be down, but we are not out," the Texas Republican said in a statement. "We will deliver a strong, new farm bill on time ... our nation's farmers and ranchers and rural America deserve nothing else."

USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue said a farm bill is necessary to provide farmers, ranchers, foresters and other producers with the stability and predictability they need.

"Our farmers feed the people of this nation and the world, and they deserve the certainty of a farm bill," he said.

Others in the agricultural community echoed that sentiment in press statements, but they were divided as to whether the bill's defeat was a curse or a blessing.

American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall said the organization is already starting to hear from farmers, many of whom are perplexed and outraged.

"They are facing very real financial challenges," he said.

"We call on all members of Congress not to use farmers and ranchers as pawns in a political game. The risk-management tools of the farm bill are too important, particularly at a time of depressed farm prices."

National Farmers Union, however, said rejection of the bill highlights the host of concerns family farmers have with the legislation.

"At a time when farmers and ranchers are in significant financial strain due to years of depressed prices, this bill does not make necessary improvements to the farm safety net," Roger Johnson, NFU president, said.

It eliminates conservation programs and funding and reverses progress toward expanding farmers' access to local, regional and specialty markets. It also makes unnecessary cuts to programs that feed hungry Americans, he said.

"Major changes need to be made to this bill," he said.

National Cattlemen's Beef Association said the bill's failure is a disappointment for cattle producers.

"It is unfortunate that some in Congress chose not to stand with the farmers and ranchers who work hard every day to feed families in the United States and around the world," Allison Cooke, NCBA executive director of government affairs, said.

The bill addresses several priorities for cattle producers, including an expanded foot-and-mouth disease vaccine bank, funding for environmental stewardship initiatives and trade promotion programs.

It is critical that Congress pass a new farm bill before Sept. 30 to provide certainty for cattle and beef producers, she said.

The National Association of Conservation Districts also expressed its disappointment.

"Today's defeat brings us further away from passing a new farm bill on time and providing producers with the certainty they need to continue feeding and clothing this nation," Brent Van Dyke, NACD president, said.

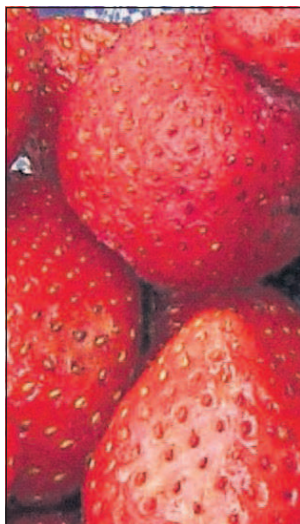
"Farmers and ranchers across the country utilize farm bill conservation programs on their operations every day to preserve natural resources for future generations," he said.

# Oregon farm seeks \$2.5 million for wrong strawberries

Lawsuit filed against Norcal Nursery, a California grower

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

An Oregon farm claims to have suffered \$2.5 million in damages from planting an incorrect variety of strawberries sold by a nursery in California.



Capital Press File

An Oregon farm has filed a lawsuit against a California nursery alleging that it received the wrong plants.

variety that Townsend had to plow under and replace with the correct cultivar, the complaint said.

"Further, as a result of the low yield, inferior quality and loss of growing cycles, Townsend Farms has incurred lost profits that would have resulted from the sale of its strawberries," according to the complaint.

The lawsuit alleges that Norcal violated its contract, breached an express warranty and acted negligently in shipping the strawberries, causing damages of at least \$2.5 million.

Capital Press was unable to reach a representative of Norcal Nursery as of press time.



Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

The remains of a calf lie Sept. 6, 2016, on a U.S. Forest Service grazing allotment in Ferry County, Wash. Investigators concluded the calf was shot to death before scavengers got to the carcass. The Stevens County Cattlemen's Association is offering a \$15,000 reward for tips leading to a conviction for shooting cattle in Stevens and Ferry counties.

# Washington ranchers increase reward for cow shooters

Cattlemen link killings to wolf issue

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

A reward offered by a cattlemen's group for tips leading to a conviction for shooting cattle in Stevens and Ferry counties has been increased to \$15,000.

Ranchers say shooting cattle is on the upswing. They suspect it's fallout over the conflicts with wolves.

A Western Washington man, who wants to remain

anonymous, contributed \$10,000 to the reward fund, Stevens County Cattlemen's Association President Justin Hedrick said Monday.

The contribution, combined with other donations, allowed the cattlemen's association to increase its standing reward from \$2,500. The association will pay a maximum of \$15,000 a year for tips that lead to a conviction.

Hedrick said he hoped the bigger reward will draw out useful information. "At \$2,500, we never got any bites," he said.

Hedrick, a partner in the family-owned Diamond M Ranch, estimated that about 50 cows have been shot on private and public lands in the two counties during the past five years. Previously, it was a more rare occurrence, he said.

"Through the years we've always had some, but not like it's been the last five years," Hedrick said. "I'm going to speculate that it's wolf-related."

Hedrick said a dozen of the ranch's cattle were shot in one recent year. One was butchered for the meat, he said, while the others were not.

The cows were common-

ly shot in the stomach with small-caliber firearms, Hedrick said. "It's a very slow, cruel, miserable death."

In some cases, other animals have scavenged the remains of cattle, but in the most recent case Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife investigators ruled out predators and found evidence that the cow had been shot.

In one case from last summer in Ferry County, a cow was shot in the shoulder, rolled down a hill and died, according to a department report.

The department has not reported cow-shooting incidents in its periodic public reports on what it calls "key wolf activities."

Cattle Producers of Washington President Scott Nielsen, a Stevens County rancher, said the shooting of cattle has been under-publicized by the department.

"We have had cows shot up here, and I can tell you we believe it's related to the wolf issue," he said. "I don't think (Fish and Wildlife) want the story being told about what's happening out there."

Efforts to reach the department to comment Tuesday were unsuccessful.

According to the Stevens County Cattlemen's Association, tipsters can call the association at (509) 680-3497 or the sheriff's offices in Ferry or Stevens County.

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