

Breadcrumb

1. [Home](#)
2. Print
3. Pdf
4. Node
5. Entity Print

How Wildlife Services Works with Livestock Producers

Last Modified:

Wildlife Services personnel are available to help producers address predation problems and reduce livestock losses.

Making the Initial Contact

Often producers request assistance with livestock predation problems after they have tried unsuccessfully to reduce losses to a tolerable level. Typically, producers have attempted to modify their husbandry practices, use other nonlethal management options, or implement various lethal methods. In some situations, lethal methods have not worked due to legal or time constraints, the predation problem was too severe given the choice of methods used, or the lack of experience using particular methods.

A producer typically makes initial contact with WS by a telephone call or a conversation at a meeting or public event. The producer may contact the WS State or Area Offices, or the WS Specialist in their area. During this initial request, the producer describes the occurrence, extent, and location of the predation losses, as well as any methods already being employed to reduce losses. WS provides advice and recommendations and may follow up with a mailing of technical materials.

Conducting the Site Visit/Meeting

WS may conduct a site visit to gather firsthand knowledge of the predation problem and predators involved and to discuss options for reducing losses. The producer details the predation losses, including physical evidence, the location, and control methods that have already been attempted or are in use. The WS Specialist will assess husbandry practices and investigate predation evidence such as the livestock carcass or predator tracks and scat at the kill site. The Specialist will also evaluate habitat, examine property fences, and evaluate management methods in use, and may also offer technical advice to increase effectiveness of the tools already being used. If operational assistance is requested, the property boundaries will be described or physically reviewed.

Signing an Agreement

If the producer requests that WS conduct predator management, an Agreement For Control of Animal Damage (WS Form 12) is negotiated and signed. In this agreement the rancher authorizes access, methods/tools, as well as the species to be managed. A Cooperative Service Agreement (CSA) may also be developed if the activity is not already being funded by another source. Other details may also be negotiated and identified on the agreements, including an estimated time frame, names of WS personnel that will conduct the activities, and specific instructions regarding property access and boundaries. The producer and WS will clarify property boundaries and use of specialized wildlife management tools to be used by WS (firearms, traps, toxicants, etc.). Once the agreement is signed and any necessary authorizations are obtained, WS initiates work activities.

Conducting the Predation Management Program

During the project, WS and the producer communicate about predation events, logistics, wildlife activity and management, use of specialized tools (such as traps and M44's), and any unforeseen circumstances that could affect management activities or effectiveness. Open communication and partnership between WS and the producer are the most important aspect of WS operational management to effectively reduce predation problems. Once predator management activities are completed, WS informs the producer and provides results and other information about the project.

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