

February Livestock Lessons- Livestock Predation

Coyotes are the major source of livestock predation in the Special Areas, and should be a concern for livestock producers as they directly affect your bottom line. In Alberta, coyote predation on livestock is regulated by both the [Agricultural Pests Act](#) and the *Pest and Nuisance Control Regulation*, which declares coyotes to be a 'nuisance' species. For this reason, Agricultural Fieldman are authorized as inspectors under the act and can carry out the Coyote Predation Management Program (CPMP). There are several control methods that producers can use to minimize predation, particularly this time of year when calves and lambs may be beginning to hit the ground.

The Ag Fieldman of Special Areas recommend the best practices below to producers battling calf or lamb losses, listed in order of importance:

1. LIVESTOCK HUSBANDRY

The most valuable tool we have against predation is livestock management. By minimizing the conflict opportunities between coyotes and livestock we can create a fairly good defense system against predation.

- A) **Herd Surveillance:** First time calvers should never be left alone in an open range situation as they require much more surveillance as mature mother cows that have seen predation before. The daily (or more often) presence of a herd manager can also considerably reduce conflicts. This is even more pertinent when lambing.
- B) **Corralling at Night:** This may be more practical and important for lamb producers, but can be applied during calving season if necessary. Be sure to observe the livestock's behavior as herds/flocks that are repeatedly attacked by coyotes will show signs of nervousness and alertness.
- C) **Carrion Disposal:** This is HUGE! You should remove all carrion (dead stock) to a designated site away from your livestock. Coyote predation on livestock is a **learned behaviour** so it is imperative that you do not give coyotes an opportunity to develop a taste for your stock, dead or alive. Although it is difficult to bury deadstock in the winter, burial or incineration is ideal. At the very least, keep your dead piles far from your calving or lambing grounds.
- D) **Guard Animals:** According to Alberta Agriculture's Livestock Predation Manual, **guard dogs are the best tool for reducing livestock losses to predators.** The guardian animal should stay with the herd/flock at all times, and will require some investment including training, veterinarian care, feeding and housing. Common guardian animals include dogs, donkeys and llamas.
- E) **Fencing:** Success with this method will be varied and dependant on your situation. Net fences will deter many coyotes, as well as combinations of barbed wire and electric fences. However it is important to remember that the coyote's motivation and past experiences will affect their determination. In other words, if the coyotes know that calves or lambs on the other side of the fence have been an easy meal before, they will dig under any fence to get to them again.

Resources:

[Coyote Predation of Livestock](#) Book by Alberta Agriculture & Forestry (or ask your Ag Fieldman to borrow their copy!)

[Protecting Livestock From Predation with Electric Fences](#)

[Predation Management for Alberta Flocks](#)

2. SHOOTING & TRAPPING

This is also a very valuable tool in our toolbox against coyote predation and is highly encouraged. In Alberta, *any Albertan resident may hunt coyotes without a licence throughout the year on land to which he or she has the right of access, except on unoccupied lands in the Green Areas, where hunting is only permitted during hunting season* (Alberta Environment & Parks). If you wish to trap coyotes, you need to be licenced and should speak with your local Fish & Wildlife Officer for more information. Coyote furs can also be redeemed for money from certain retailers, such as Hanna Building Supplies located in the town of Hanna.

[2015-16 Alberta Guide to Trapping Regulations](#)

[Alberta Environment & Parks](#)

Local Fish & Wildlife Offices:

Hanna (403) 854-5540

Oyen (403) 664-3614

Provost (780) 753-2433

3. POISONING

This is a last resort and should only be used when all other recommendations have been exhausted. Your local Ag Fieldman can issue Sodium Monofluoroacetate (Compound 1080) lethal tablets to be ingested by the coyote with bait, as part of the CPMP program. It is important to note that these pills are very dangerous, and can only kill one coyote at a time, and therefore are not nearly as effective as the above methods of control. If you believe you may be a candidate for 1080 tablets you should contact your Ag Fieldman and they will determine if they are viable option for your operation.

Special Areas 2 Ag Fieldman: Jesse Williams (403) 854-1114 Hanna, AB

Special Areas 3 Ag Fieldman: Currently Vacant (Oyen, AB)

Special Areas 4 Ag Fieldman: Justine Simpson (403) 877-3523 Consort, AB

Not sure if it's a coyote? All wolf and cougar possible predations should be reported to your local Fish & Wildlife Officer. They can also help develop a plan to reduce the predation by the species.

Predation- What Species Was it?

	Coyotes	Wolves	Cougars
Feeding Habit	- pull and tear their meat, creating rough edges -their bite is not powerful enough to break large bones	- powerful bite of the wolf usually causes deep damage in the underlying tissue and can crush bones	-when feeding on the meat, the cougar will chew off pieces, leaving clean-cut edges, different than the

			rough edges of a coyote or wolf who pull and tear their meat
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Small Animal Attacks	<p>-new born calves are generally attacked at the flank with the abdomen ripped open and internal organs eaten. They may also bite the calves on the top of the back.</p> <p>-the hindquarters and flanks are the target area for attacks on older calves, but may also be damaged at nose, neck, shoulders and tail.</p> <p>-in lamb predations, over 70% are killed by throat attack, which reveals many tooth punctures and much tissue damage and hemorrhage. Very young lambs are often bitten at the top of the skull.</p>	<p>-6 to 9 month old calves are the most common livestock prey of wolves. Lambs or other smaller animals are also attacked.</p> <p>-bites to the head, neck, back, flanks and hindquarters are common. Crushed skulls, severed spine and disembowelment are observed.</p> <p>-lambs are usually attacked at the throat, similar to coyotes, but damage will be much more extensive</p>	<p>-small calves, lambs or goats are usually killed with a bite to the top of the head, severing the spinal column.</p>
Large Animal Attacks	<p>- coyotes rarely attack adult cattle, preferring calves under one month old or lambs.</p>	<p>- focal point of wolf predation on mature cattle are hindquarters, including tail, thighs and rectal area. However the face, front legs, flanks and upper shoulders may also be attacked.</p>	<p>-larger animals are killed by leaping onto the backs or shoulders of the animals and biting their neck. Claw marks are usually evident on the shoulders, neck and back.</p> <p>-blood, heart, lungs, livers and kidneys are usually eaten first through an opening behind the ribs.</p>
Kill Site	<p>-prefer to kill in the open near bush or under cover of a hollow, ravine or other rough terrain.</p> <p>-only the head, skeleton and hide will be all that remain. Unlike wolves,</p>	<p>- may carry or drag small prey away to be eaten, or may totally consume their prey at the site.</p>	<p>-attacks generally occur in or near cover, allowing the cougar to approach within striking distance</p>

	<p>coyotes cannot break and consumer larger bones.</p> <p>-scattered bones, stomach contents and wool/hair are often all that remains at a coyote kill site.</p>	<p>-bones are often chewed and broken</p> <p>-hides and other soft tissues are eaten</p>	<p>-confined livestock are often attacked</p> <p>-may be drag marks at the kill site, as cougars usually drag smaller prey to cover before feeding</p>
Carrion Feeding	<p>-it is often hard to determine if a newborn calf was killed by a coyote or if it was dead, then fed on by a coyote. However, feeding coyotes will usually begin with entry into the abdomen</p>	<p>-wolves readily feed on carrion, especially during the winter months when food is scarce</p>	<p>-cougars won't typically eat carrion, unless no other prey is available</p>

Ag Pests Act - http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Regs/2001_184.pdf

Coyote Predation of Livestock - <https://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/app08/ppropintheweb?PubID=301>

Protecting Livestock From Predation with Electric Fences -
[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex888](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex888)

Predation Management of Alberta Flocks -
[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/sg15437](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/sg15437)

2015-2016 Alberta Guide to Trapping Regulations – <http://esrd.alberta.ca/fish-wildlife/fishing-hunting-trapping/default.aspx>

Alberta Environment & Parks - <http://esrd.alberta.ca/fish-wildlife/wild-species/mammals/wild-dogs/coyote.aspx>