

THE TRUTH ABOUT WOLVES AND LIVESTOCK

While *the details of wolf predation on livestock and game make for juicy newspaper headlines, the data collected by wildlife biologists over the past decade tell a far less lurid story. What's more, understanding this data has led to workable solutions for ranchers and hunters across the West. We believe an understanding of the facts can help the states create fair, balanced plans for managing our native wolves.*

DOMESTIC SHEEP



Livestock loss due to wolves in the Northern Rockies represents less than 1 percent of all livestock loss.

Yes, wolves kill livestock, but not to the degree extremists would have you believe. For example, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, wolves in Idaho killed 244 sheep in 2005, 237 in 2006, and 185 in 2007. Compare those numbers to other causes of death for sheep in Idaho in 2004 (the last year with complete statistics). Overall sheep deaths were reportedly due to:

- digestive problems: 1,600
- respiratory disease: 1,300
- birthing problems: 1,100
- miscellaneous health problems: 3,200
- predators (all combined): 12,100*
- harsh weather: 600
- poisoning: 800

*Sheep deaths due to predators represented 55 percent of overall losses.

Predator depredation deaths included:

- coyotes: 7,100 sheep
- dogs: 1,400 sheep
- bears: 1,100 sheep
- mountain lions: 400 sheep
- wolves: 270 sheep

In short, less than one percent of sheep losses in Idaho were caused by wolves. Sheep losses in the other states were similar.

WHAT ABOUT CATTLE?



Interestingly enough, the same basic numbers hold true. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in 2006, wolves killed 54 cattle in the state of Wyoming, while in 2007, wolves killed 55. Let's compare those numbers to other losses. In 2005 (the year with the most recent data), not including cattle that were slaughtered at market, 42,000 cows and calves died from all causes in Wyoming. These losses were reportedly due to:

- digestive problems: 7,700
- respiratory disease: 8,700
- birthing problems: 7,800
- miscellaneous health problems: 1,600
- lameness and injuries: N/A
- predators (all combined): 4,000
- harsh weather: 7,000
- poisoning: 1,500
- theft: 600

Cattle deaths due to all predators represented less than 10 percent of overall estimated losses. These depredation deaths included:

- coyotes: 2,300 calves
- mountain lions: 500 calves
- dogs: 100 calves
- wolves: 54 calves/cattle

Again, the numbers for all three states were quite similar, with wolves being responsible for less than one percent of cattle losses in each. What's more, most livestock owners who experience verified depredation losses to wolves both seek and receive compensation for those losses.