

Idaho Wolf Depredation Compensation Plan

(2009 Grazing Season)

The goal of the State Wolf Depredation Compensation Plan is threefold. The first goal is to ensure the long-term survival of wolves in Idaho. Second, provide a process for compensation for wolf-livestock conflicts that inevitably result when wolves and livestock are in the same vicinity. And finally provide a means of compensation to those livestock producers who go out of their way to avoid or reduce wolf-livestock conflicts.

Wolf-caused mortalities are difficult to detect in range livestock areas. Heavy cover, large pastures, great topographical variation and complete carcass consumption by wolves lend increasing degrees of difficulty to timely detection of wolf kills. The proportion of wolf-related depredations that go undetected or unconfirmed is unknown and will vary by area. For example, two studies (Oakleaf, et. al., 2003 and Bjorge and Gunson, 1985) on cattle have shown that for every 5.8 or 6.7 cattle lost only 1 confirmed kill was noted. Given this, the number of unconfirmed depredation losses attributed to wolves will always be a contentious issue.

Some scientific data also suggests that further effects of wolf predation include stress-related loss of body condition in harassed herds and subsequent decreases in pregnancy rates and weaning weights (Stricklin and Mench, 1989). Cattle seeking to escape wolves may leave areas where they are supposed to be and disrupt grazing management plans. Economic losses and/or penalties from land management agencies could be the result.

For some ranchers, the cumulative effects of wolf predation may cause losses sufficiently severe that livestock production becomes untenable. Although the impact of wolf predation to the entire livestock industry of the state is expected to be small, the impact to the individual can be devastating. This plan provides a means for compensating, at least in part, wolf-livestock conflicts that inevitably result when wolves and livestock are in the same vicinity. In addition, it tries to compensate those producers who go out of their way to avoid or reduce wolf-livestock conflicts.

The following are offered as guidelines and are in no way to be considered “final.” (See page 3, last paragraph.) Although some research would indicate otherwise, it is suggested that this program recognize three types of losses plus proactive approaches for possible compensation:

- 1) Confirmed kills based upon field examination.
- 2) Probable kills based upon field examination.
- 3) No confirmed or probable kills but livestock missing and wolves in the area.
- 4) Proactive programs that reduce the opportunity for wolf-livestock interactions.

Confirmed losses are currently paid at 100 % and probable losses at 50 % of market value for livestock lost to wolves through the Defenders of Wildlife Wolf Compensation Program. Currently, USDA/APHIS Wildlife Services makes these determinations for confirmed or probable losses. The Idaho Wolf Depredation Compensation Fund would compensate a producer for the losses above and beyond normal where wolves exist yet losses have not been determined as “confirmed” or “probable” based on the standard compensation criteria

established by Defenders of Wildlife. The Idaho Wolf Depredation Compensation Fund is designed to compensate for documented losses that are not covered by Defenders or any other sources. Compensation dollars will be prorated among the requests dependent upon the number of claims filed versus the number of dollars to be used for paying such claims.

Methodology:

- 1) Prices paid will be a blended price per hundredweight for steers and heifers for calves lost, price per hundredweight received for market cows and bulls, or dollars per hundredweight for lambs or ewes lost.
- 2) Compensation will be paid based upon site specific information regarding actual losses submitted by the applicant. Compensation for verified losses will be given priority. The emphasis will then shift to compensating for missing livestock. Finally, compensation for proactive efforts will be awarded IF funds are available.
- 3) In those cases where there's insufficient, reliable evidence to determine losses above those expected from causes other than wolf predation a multiplier will be applied. The actual multiplier used is to be determined by the compensation board on a case-by-case basis.
- 4) Compensation will not be automatic and the determination of the compensation board will be final.

Compensation for Proactive Efforts:

- 1) Up to 50 % of the actual costs incurred for current year, proactive, out of pocket expenses.
- 2) Proactive approaches include, but are not limited to, renting pastures away from known rendezvous sites when conflicts are known to be inevitable, hiring of extra riders or herders, use of guard dogs, etc.
- 3) Compensation will not be automatic and the determination of the compensation board will be final.
- 4) It is recommended that direct losses be given the highest priority for payment.

For purposes of this program the following documentation will be needed to file a claim:

- 1) Grazing livestock has some inherent risk. Because of this, there is a "normal" death loss associated with grazing cattle on range. Claimants will need to supply documentation of this normal loss. This can be accomplished by providing "on/off" counts as submitted to agency personnel with a minimum of three consecutive years data required, historic losses from neighboring ranches running on the same allotment if three years data are not available.
- 2) Losses will require documented depredations or confirmed wolf presence in the area in question. For a confirmed sighting to be valid it must be recorded by either IDFG, USDA/APHIS WS or employees of the Nez Perce Tribe wolf monitoring group.

A compensation board of eight county commissioners or their designee, one each from Adams, Clark, Custer, Fremont, Idaho, Lemhi, Valley and Washington counties will make up the

compensation board. Rotation among other counties may be desirable in the future as determined by the board. Available funds will be allocated by March 15th of each year. Compensation claims must be submitted by **December 31, 2009** for the previous year and mailed to:

Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation
Attn: Dustin Miller
300 North 6th Street, Suite 101
Boise, Idaho 83702

208-334-2189
208-334-2172 (fax)
dmiller@osc.idaho.gov

It is recognized that 2% of the allocated funds can be used for administrative expenses.

Payment determination will be made after all claims have been reviewed. If questions arise as to the validity of a claim, the board reserves the right to gather more information.

The original review committee appointed by the Governor will act as the overall program review committee. As new information becomes available or as circumstances change, the review committee needs to have the latitude to adjust the program to meet different situations. The review committee is currently James Whittaker, Leadore; Suzanne (Lavery) Stone, Boise; Jim Hawkins, Challis, and a representative from Office of Species Conservation.