



SHEEP AND  
PREDATOR  
MANAGEMENT



PREDATORS HAVE POSED A SERIOUS  
THREAT TO LIVESTOCK FOR AS LONG  
AS SHEEP, CATTLE AND OTHER ANIMALS  
HAVE BEEN DOMESTICATED BY HUMANS.  
MOST LIVESTOCK OPERATORS —  
INCLUDING SHEEP PRODUCERS — ACCEPT  
SOME LOSS TO PREDATORS AS THE COST  
OF DOING BUSINESS. HOWEVER, WHEN  
SHEEP LOSSES FROM PREDATORS  
EXCEED 40 PERCENT — AS IS THE CASE  
IN SOME OPERATIONS — IT BECOMES  
**A MATTER OF SURVIVAL**  
FOR PRODUCERS AND THE COMMUNITIES  
THE PRODUCERS HELP SUPPORT.

## HOW SERIOUS IS THE PREDATOR ISSUE?

Plenty serious, according to figures released by the National Agriculture Statistical Service (NASS). Consider the following:

- In 1994, American sheep producers lost an estimated 520,600 sheep and lambs to predators. That's 1,426 animals per day.
- Predators accounted for nearly 42 percent of sheep and lamb losses in 1994, costing the sheep industry \$35 million in potential income.
- Predation accounts for 11.6 percent of the total cost of sheep production, second only to feed and pasture costs.
- In Idaho, Montana and Wyoming sheep producers report that losses to predators have risen an additional 33.5 percent between 1990 and 1994.

The marked increase in losses to predators nationwide can be attributed to several factors: more predators, fewer and less efficient methods for controlling predators and insufficient predator-management programs.

## WHAT DETERS PREDATORS?

The cost of predation plus the cost of efforts to prevent sheep from being killed by predators is second only to feed and pasture costs in terms of production expenses. For centuries, shepherds have guarded their flocks against predators. In recent years, four-footed "shepherds" — guard dogs, donkeys and llamas — have been enlisted as a predator-control force. They are aided in their duties by electric fences and electric guards, pens and noise-making devices.

While sheep producers rely on these and other non-lethal tools as their first line of defense against predators, these methods are not a cure all for predation. For example:

- Coyotes and other predators quickly adjust to the sounds emitted from noise-making equipment, which can have the opposite effect of attracting predators to the sheep.
- While guard animals are more effective than noise-making devices, sheep's major predator — the coyote — has been known to use pack strategies to lure guard animals away from sheep. In several recorded cases, coyote packs have attacked and killed guard animals.

The American Sheep Industry Association encourages non-lethal predator control methods while supporting efforts to establish and maintain adequate predator-management programs nationwide. Chief among these is the Animal Damage Control (ADC) program. Since wildlife is publicly owned, the public shares a responsibility in controlling wildlife damage. Therefore, the ADC program is a joint private, state and federally funded program designed to reduce problems created when wildlife damage agricultural, urban and natural resources or threaten public health and safety.



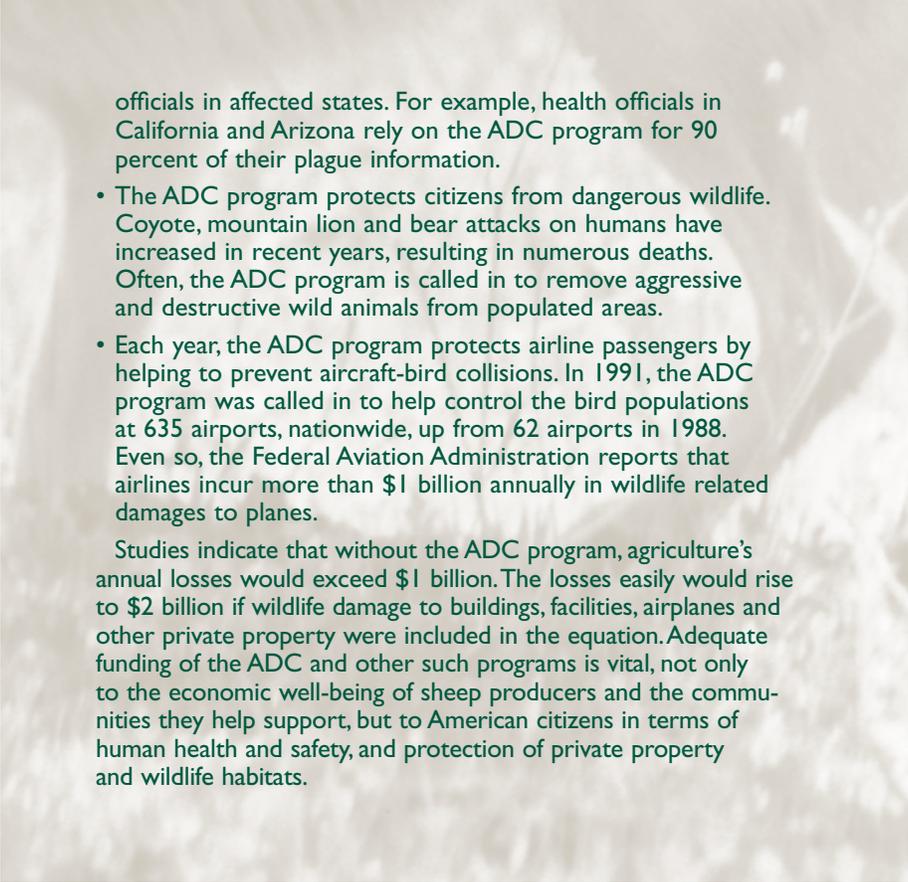
## **ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL BENEFITS ALL AMERICANS**

The \$27 million ADC program represents one of the most efficient and cost-effective programs within the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The ADC program doesn't just benefit sheep producers and other agricultural operators, it benefits the general public as well. For example:

- The ADC program provides protection for endangered and threatened species. In Montana and Wyoming, the program helped restore black-footed ferrets to their native habitats by controlling the coyote population. In California, the ADC program protects both the kit fox and the desert tortoise against predators.
- The ADC program protects the public from devastating diseases such as rabies, plague and Lyme Disease by controlling the animals that transmit the disease organisms.
- The ADC program serves as an information source on deadly diseases. In 1993, 25 percent of Colorado and Wyoming counties experienced epidemics of plague, a disease transmitted chiefly by infected prairie dogs and other rodents. A year later, plague-related deaths were reported in Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming. The ADC program tracks plague outbreaks and deaths and passes information along to health



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officials in affected states. For example, health officials in California and Arizona rely on the ADC program for 90 percent of their plague information.

- The ADC program protects citizens from dangerous wildlife. Coyote, mountain lion and bear attacks on humans have increased in recent years, resulting in numerous deaths. Often, the ADC program is called in to remove aggressive and destructive wild animals from populated areas.
- Each year, the ADC program protects airline passengers by helping to prevent aircraft-bird collisions. In 1991, the ADC program was called in to help control the bird populations at 635 airports, nationwide, up from 62 airports in 1988. Even so, the Federal Aviation Administration reports that airlines incur more than \$1 billion annually in wildlife related damages to planes.

Studies indicate that without the ADC program, agriculture's annual losses would exceed \$1 billion. The losses easily would rise to \$2 billion if wildlife damage to buildings, facilities, airplanes and other private property were included in the equation. Adequate funding of the ADC and other such programs is vital, not only to the economic well-being of sheep producers and the communities they help support, but to American citizens in terms of human health and safety, and protection of private property and wildlife habitats.

## SHEEP AND PREDATOR MANAGEMENT

is a publication of the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI), which represents more than 80,000 U.S. sheep producers. Sheep are a natural, low-cost means of managing rangelands, forests, and agricultural lands, even as they produce important resources, such as wool, meat, and lanolin. ASI is committed to proper grazing that benefits the environment, wildlife, the taxpaying public and consumers.

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