

IMPACT OF PREDATION

Predation of sheep and lambs is a more serious problem than many realize. According to figures released by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), consider the following:

- In 2004, American sheep producers lost an estimated 224,200 sheep and lambs to predators.¹ That is more than 614 animals per day.
- Predators accounted for nearly 37.3 percent of total sheep and lamb losses in 2004, costing the sheep industry more than \$38 million in potential income.
- Depredation accounts for 15 percent of the total cost of sheep production, second only to feed and pasture costs.

Note: NASS reports sheep and lamb loss only after docking; lambs lost prior to docking are not counted.

The American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) estimates that approximately 30 percent of predation in lambs occurs prior to docking. According to data collected from five western states who reported pre-docking, lamb-loss numbers in 2004, ASI estimates an additional 50,000 to 60,000 lambs were lost across the entire nation prior to docking.

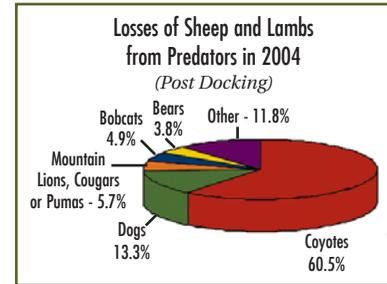
This adjustment raises the total number of sheep and lamb losses in 2004 from 224,200 to more than 274,000 – more than 750 lambs per day.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

An analysis of 1998 data shows that for every dollar spent for predation management, \$3 worth of livestock was saved. When you put that in today's values for livestock, every federal dollar spent on managing predators results in \$10.84 in livestock saved, conservatively, \$97.5 million.

TYPES OF PREDATORS

Sheep producers in all corners of the United States are faced with one type of predator or another, whether it's the wolf and coyote in Montana or a dog in Massachusetts. The most damaging of predators to a sheep operation is the one causing the most trouble at that specific time and in that place.



MANAGING LIVESTOCK PREDATION

The management of predation by wildlife is a necessary component of livestock production. Due to the changing societal values over the recent past, there has been more of an emphasis on non-lethal methods for managing predators. The concept behind this method is to retain the predators in their natural habitat, while protecting livestock at the same time.

According to NASS, "U.S. farmers and ranchers spent \$9.8 million in 2004 on non-lethal methods to protect their flocks." The most common non-lethal methods include: fencing, night penning, guard dogs and lamb sheds.

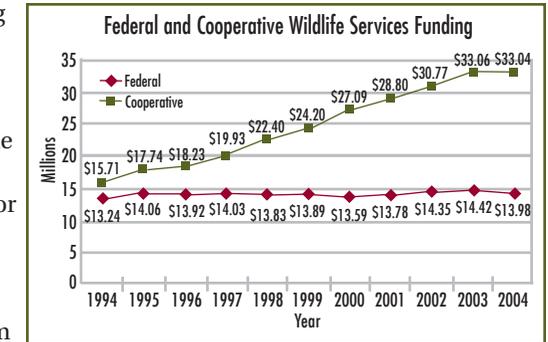
These non-lethal methods are aided in their duties by electric fencing, electric guards and noise-making devices. However, these methods are not a cure-all for depredation as some predators quickly adjust to sounds emitted from noise-making equipment. In fact, sheep's major predator – the coyote – has been known to use pack strategies to lure guard animals away from sheep.

WORKING TOGETHER

State and federal governments have assumed many of the predation-management programs once implemented by livestock producers. Therefore, Wildlife Services (WS), a joint private, state and federally funded program, has an extensive system in place to implement livestock-protection programs.

Lack of increased federal funding over the past 10 years has forged private partnerships, resulting in large, private contributions to fund WS program costs.

- In Montana, 49 of the 56 counties provide additional funding for livestock protection.
- Positive results have expanded a small depredation program in Wyoming into a statewide program.
- Through cooperative programs, West Virginia has reduced livestock losses to predators by 94 percent.



ASI recognizes that wildlife is a valuable public resource and that wildlife must be managed in a responsible and legal manner. Therefore, ASI supports the integrated management of predators, using both non-lethal and lethal methods.





Since wildlife is publicly owned, the public shares a responsibility in controlling wildlife damage. Therefore, the Wildlife Services program is a joint private, state and federally funded program designed to mitigate the danger and damage that the public's wildlife can inflict on private property and public health and safety. The sheep industry does its part by already spending more than \$16 million annually managing predation.

The American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) is a federation of 42 state sheep associations representing the nation's sheep producers with a common goal to promote the well-being and profitability of the U.S. sheep industry. From East to West, farm flocks to range operations, ASI works to represent the interests of the producer. A team of volunteer producer leaders directs the actions of the association through their involvement on the executive board, the board of directors and councils and committees.



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1)USDA, NASS, Sheep & Goat Death Loss, May 6, 2005.

(This report is amended every five years.)

*Coyote pictures courtesy of Guy Connolly.



SHEEP AND PREDATOR MANAGEMENT

