

Wolf-livestock conflict in Huckleberry pack, 2014

Last updated: August 28, 2014



Background:

The producer grazes about 1,800 domestic sheep (lambs and ewes) on a lease with a private timber company. The sheep are grazed as one large flock. The flock is managed by a shepherd (or the producer) and four guard dogs. They are allowed to graze over the landscape during the day and are gathered by the shepherd and his dogs each night for safe keeping. The herder manages the flock by moving among the sheep during the day, routinely removing sick or injured sheep, and removing dead sheep from the range, when feasible.

The land is predominantly managed for timber production and is in various stages of timber harvest and regeneration. The terrain is rugged, with steep canyons, partially forested areas, and brushy draws. Given the rugged terrain, the sheep are not always in a single concentrated group during the night; sometimes small groups of sheep are bedded in close proximity to each other. There are also some stragglers that do not come into the bedding area in a timely manner. In morning, the sheep transition out into feeding areas.

Department staff communicated with the producer regularly over the past couple of years and he was aware that the area included in his grazing lease was included in the Huckleberry pack territory. There were no confirmed wolf depredations on his sheep during the 2013 grazing season on this allotment. The producer found several dead sheep in late-June but could not determine the cause of death. On August 10th, the producer found several dead sheep that he thought were killed by cougar. These and other sheep discovered upon investigation were confirmed by WDFW to be caused by wolves.



Figure 1. Photo of actual sheep grazing area showing brushy terrain (Photo courtesy of King 5 News).

Plan Consistency:

Washington's Wolf Conservation and Management Plan states that lethal removal may be used to stop repeated depredation if it is documented that livestock have been clearly killed by wolves, non-lethal methods have been tried but failed to resolve the conflict, depredations are likely to continue, and there is no evidence of intentional feeding or unnatural attraction of wolves by the livestock owner. The Department, with review by a citizen-stakeholder Wolf Advisory Group, has further defined the conditions for the use of lethal action through the development of a checklist that identifies the non-lethal methods required and a protocol (and flow-chart) describing the process for considering such an action. A chronology of the depredation events and response by WDFW are captured in the following table.

Date	Preventative Measures	Depredation Event and Observations	Lethal	Comments
June 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 herder • 4 guard dogs • Remove sick/injured livestock when feasible • Remove dead sheep when feasible 	4 dead sheep; unknown cause of death	None	Prior to notifying WDFW
Sunday Aug 10, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 herder • 4 guard dogs • Remove sick/injured livestock when feasible • Remove dead sheep when feasible 	5 dead sheep; reported as cougar to WDFW	None	WDFW deploys hound hunter to remove cougar on Monday
Monday Aug 11, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 herder • 4 guard dogs • Remove sick/injured livestock when feasible • Remove dead sheep when feasible 	CONFIRMED DEPREDATION #1 - Hound hunter reports finding 12 dead sheep (these include the 5 previously reported by the producer)	None	Hound hunter reports large canid tracks in area, no cougar sign
Tuesday Aug 12, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 herder • 4 guard dogs • Remove sick/injured livestock when feasible • Remove dead sheep when feasible 	CONFIRMED DEPREDATION #2 - Hound hunter reports finding 2 dead sheep	None	
Wednesday Aug 13, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 herder • 4 guard dogs • Remove sick/injured livestock when feasible • Remove dead sheep when feasible • Verbally sharing wolf location data 		None	WDFW confirms wolf tracks and initiates investigation of the dead sheep
Thursday Aug 14, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 herder • 4 guard dogs • Remove sick/injured livestock when feasible • Remove dead sheep when feasible 		None	WDFW confirms that the depredations on Aug 11 & 12 were caused by wolves WDFW deploys staff and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 WDFW staff: hazing, herding, night patrol • 1 range rider (working with WDFW staff, not on horseback) • Verbally sharing wolf location data 			contracted range rider to site
Friday Aug 15, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 herder • 4 guard dogs • Remove sick/injured livestock when feasible • Remove dead sheep when feasible • Verbally sharing wolf location data 		None	
Saturday Aug 16, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 herder • 4 guard dogs • Remove sick/injured livestock when feasible • Remove dead sheep when feasible • Verbally sharing wolf location data 		None	
Sunday Aug 17, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 herder • 4 guard dogs • Remove sick/injured livestock when feasible • Remove dead sheep when feasible • Verbally sharing wolf location data 		None	
Monday Aug 18, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 herder • 4 guard dogs • Remove sick/injured livestock when feasible • Remove dead sheep when feasible • 1 range rider • Verbally sharing wolf location data 		None	
Tuesday Aug 19, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 herder • 4 guard dogs • Remove sick/injured livestock when feasible • Remove dead sheep when feasible • 4 WDFW staff: hazing, herding, night 	CONFIRMED DEPREDATION #3 - 1 sheep depredation (dead)(likely killed evening of Aug 18)	None	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> patrol 1 range rider Verbally sharing wolf location data 			
Wednesday Aug 20, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 herder 4 guard dogs Remove sick/injured livestock when feasible Remove dead sheep when feasible 3 WDFW staff: hazing, herding, night patrol 2 range riders (1 on horseback, 1 on foot) Verbally sharing wolf location data 	<p>CONFIRMED DEPREDAION #4 - 1 sheep depredation (dead)(found evening of Aug 19, likely killed Aug 16-18)</p>	<p>Kill authority for up to 2 wolves to producer and agency staff for wolves in vicinity of sheep</p>	<p>WDFW Issued a News Release</p> <p>Wolf Advisory Group and Interested Parties forwarded News Release</p>
Thursday Aug 21, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 herder 4 guard dogs Remove sick/injured livestock when feasible Remove dead sheep when feasible 4 WDFW staff: hazing, herding, night patrol 2 range riders (1 on horseback, 1 on foot) Verbally sharing wolf location data 		<p>Kill authority for up to 2 wolves to producer and agency staff for wolves in vicinity of sheep</p>	
Friday Aug 22, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 herder 4 guard dogs Remove sick/injured livestock when feasible Remove dead sheep when feasible 4 WDFW staff: hazing, herding, night patrol 2 range riders (1 on horseback, 1 on foot) Verbally sharing wolf location data 	<p>1 dead sheep, cause of death unknown</p> <p>CONFIRMED DEPREDAION #5 - 1 sheep depredation (dead) (found evening of Aug 21, likely killed Aug 20-21)</p>	<p>Kill authority for up to 2 wolves to producer and agency staff for wolves in vicinity of sheep</p> <p>Late afternoon, Director authorizes lethal removal of up to 4 wolves using a helicopter</p>	

<p>Saturday Aug 23, 2014</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 herder • 4 guard dogs • Remove sick/injured livestock when feasible • Remove dead sheep when feasible • 2 WDFW staff: hazing, herding, night patrol • Verbally sharing wolf location data 	<p>CONFIRMED DEPREDATION #6 - 9 sheep depredations (5 dead & 4 injured)</p>	<p>Lethal removal of up to 4 wolves began using a marksman from a helicopter</p> <p>1 female wolf removed using helicopter marksman</p> <p>Kill authority for up to 2 wolves to producer and agency staff for wolves in vicinity of sheep</p>	<p>Wolf Advisory Group and Interested Parties updated via email</p>
<p>Sunday Aug 24, 2014</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 herder • 4 guard dogs • Remove sick/injured livestock when feasible • Remove dead sheep when feasible • 2 WDFW staff: hazing, herding, night patrol • Verbally sharing wolf location data 	<p>1 potential injured sheep observed by aerial team</p>	<p>Continued lethal removal effort of up to 3 more wolves using a marksman from a helicopter</p> <p>Kill authority for up to 2 wolves to producer and agency staff for wolves in vicinity of sheep</p>	
<p>Monday Aug 25, 2014</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 herder • 4 guard dogs • Remove sick/injured livestock when feasible • Remove dead sheep when feasible 	<p>Ground team attempted to approach 1 “potential injured” sheep from Aug 25; sheep was observed and ran away when</p>	<p>Continued lethal removal effort of up to 3 more wolves using a marksman from a</p>	<p>WDFW Issued a News Release</p> <p>Wolf Advisory Group and Interested Parties forwarded</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 WDFW staff: hazing, herding, night patrol • Verbally sharing wolf location data 	approached	helicopter Kill authority for up to 2 wolves to producer and agency staff for wolves in vicinity of sheep	News Release
Tuesday Aug 26, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 herder • 4 guard dogs • Remove sick/injured livestock when feasible • Remove dead sheep when feasible • 4 WDFW staff: hazing, herding, night patrol • Verbally sharing wolf location data 	CONFIRMED DEPREDATION #7 - 1 sheep depredation (dead; likely injured sheep from Aug 25)	Morning helicopter operation only Traps set to remove up to 3 more wolves Kill authority for up to 2 wolves to producer and agency staff for wolves in vicinity of sheep	
Wednesday Aug 27, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 herder • 4 guard dogs • Remove sick/injured livestock when feasible • Remove dead sheep when feasible • 4 WDFW staff: hazing, herding, night patrol • Verbally sharing wolf location data 	3 Injured sheep observed	Traps set to remove up to 3 more wolves Kill authority for up to 2 wolves to producer and agency staff for wolves in vicinity of sheep	Wolf Advisory Group and Interested Parties updated via email
Thursday Aug 28, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 herder • 4 guard dogs • Remove sick/injured livestock when 	CONFIRMED DEPREDATION #8 - 2 sheep depredations (1	Traps set to remove up to 3 more wolves	Wolf Advisory Group and Interested Parties updated via email

	feasible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove dead sheep when feasible • 4 WDFW staff: hazing, herding, night patrol • 1 range rider • Verbally sharing wolf location data 	dead; 1 injured and euthanized)(both likely injured Aug 24-Aug 26) 1 injured sheep observed on Aug 27 not found	Kill authority for up to 2 wolves to producer and agency staff for wolves in vicinity of sheep	
--	---	--	--	--