

Plumas-Sierra-Butte Livestock & Natural Resources

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RANCHING WITH PREDATORS

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Predation of livestock by mountain lions, bears, coyotes, ravens and gray wolves is a growing concern across California. If you encounter suspected livestock killed by another animal, or depredation, at your ranch, on leased pasture or out on a wide-open allotment, it is important to take critical steps to preserve the site so a formal investigation can take place.

LOCAL CONTACTS

- Jaron Nicholas (Conflict Prevention Specialist) 530-616-7860
- Daniel Spring (Plumas-Sierra County Wildlife Specialist) 530-616-1786
- Libby Ehlers, PhD, CDFW Biologist & Wolf Coordinator for Plumas-Sierra - 916-336-2107
- Bill Watkins, Wildlife Services (USDA-WS) non-lethal specialist - 530-616-5593
- Matt Albertsen, USDA-WS Butte County - 530-538-7381

CDFW Game Wardens

- Kyle Kroll, Lieutenant (Sierra, Plumas, and Lassen) - 530-575-5736
- Sean Ihle (Plumas) – 530-967-8946
- Barry Ceccon, Lieutenant (Butte) - 530-513-4011

ADDITIONAL CONTACTS

US Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services (USDA-WS) State Office - 916-979-2675

- Derek Milsap, North District Supervisor - 530-708-0369

CDFW -

- CA Statewide Wolf Coordinator, Axel Hunnicutt - 916-628-3543
- Wolf Specialist, Nate Libal - 530-260-3118
- Game Warden Dispatch - 916-358-1312
- Central Regional Office - 916-358-2900
- Central Regional Wildlife Conflict Hotline - 916-358-2917

DEPREDATION INVESTIGATIONS AND PRESERVATION OF PREDATION SITES

CDFW and USDA-WS will coordinate with you to investigate suspected livestock depredation by carnivores to determine the cause of the livestock's injury or death. A trained and authorized investigator will thoroughly examine the carcass for bite marks and tissue damage patterns, and the surrounding area for any carnivore sign (e.g., DNA, tracks, hair, scat). A "Livestock Loss Determination Form" (wolf) - or – Wildlife Incident Report (other species) will be completed after the investigation. To assist this process, take the following critical steps:

- **Mark the location (e.g. flagging, GPS)**
- **Take pictures of the carcass and site. Use app to add GPS location information on images (e.g. timestamp, timemark)**
- **Cover potential predator signs (e.g. tracks, scat) with a can, bucket, etc.**
- **Protect carcass (e.g. cover with tarp, electric fence) to avoid further feeding on the carcass. If using a tarp, ensure it is secured with rocks and/or logs to prevent scavengers from easily accessing the carcass.**
- **Restrict access by people, dogs, and livestock. Minimize your own impact!**

- Get a picture of depredations report(s) completed by Wildlife Services or CDFW.

FINANCIAL COMPENSATION FOR LIVESTOCK DEPREDATION FROM WOLVES:

Financial compensation is available through CDFW for livestock lost or injured from wolf predation. Investigations are required to receive compensation from CDFW, as current funding is limited to livestock losses confirmed or deemed probable to be caused by wolves. Compensation funding is currently available through 2025 or until all available funding is dispersed.

Additionally, investigation reports can be used to establish potential operational losses that may qualify for additional financial compensation from USDA, Farm Service Agency (FSA). The FSA Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides benefits to livestock producers for *eligible attacks - an attack by animals reintroduced into the wild by the Federal Government or protected by Federal law, including wolves and avian predators, that directly results in either injured livestock sold at a reduced price or death of eligible livestock, in excess of normal mortality.*

How Do I report a livestock loss incident to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW):

WILDLIFE INCIDENT REPORTING SYSTEM AT <https://apps.wildlife.ca.gov/wir>, or Call contacts listed above

Reporting livestock depredations provide a formal record of the incident. Such reports may result in the issuance of a depredation permit (permit to lethally take animals creating property damage) for designated species requiring a depredation permit by California Codes and Regulations (this does **NOT** include wolves as they are a recovering species and protected by the state of CA and federally).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

It is imperative to contact CDFW and USDA-WS for investigations on potential livestock depredations. Depending on schedules, representatives from one or both agencies may conduct the investigation. During their visit, investigators will search the carcass site and surrounding area for predator sign, including tracks, hair, and scat. Therefore, it is important to preserve the site with the steps listed above. The investigators will closely examine the carcass for injuries, bite marks, tissue damage patterns and take DNA samples. Upon completion of the investigation, a "Livestock Loss Determination" report will be completed or "Wildlife Incident Report."

The lethal removal of a **gray wolf** in California is prohibited. They are a federally- and state-listed endangered species. If **wolves** are present, ranchers can non-injuriously haze wolves near livestock. "Non-injurious harassment is allowed when wolves are within 0.25 mile of livestock, or within 100 yards of a dwelling, agricultural structure, campsite, or commercial facility.¹" Additionally, there are non-lethal deterrents that may work in certain circumstance to prevent further depredations of livestock by wolves. Reporting losses from wolves will help document impacts and there may be compensation for losses. For additional information, including tools to discourage wolf presence and legal protections visit

<https://wildlife.ca.gov/conservation/mammals/gray-wolf>.



Policies have changed regarding **mountain lions** in California. If a mountain lion has been found to have caused livestock depredation, CDFW may first issue a permit to authorize non-lethal take only such as pursuit and hazing of mountain lions. CDFW will require implementation of economically and logistically feasible non-lethal measures to reduce future depredation. A depredation permit may be issued for confirmed depredation - using a stepwise process that prioritizes effective nonlethal actions, pursuant to Fish and Game Code sections 4802 and

4801.5.² “Any mountain lion that is encountered while in the act of pursuing, inflicting injury to, or killing livestock, or domestic animals, may be taken immediately by the owner of the property or the owner's employee or agent. The taking shall be reported within 72 hours to the Department.” The Department will investigate the depredation, including the circumstances and the entire mountain lion. Upon satisfactorily completing the investigation, the Department shall issue a permit confirming that the requirements of this section have been met with respect to the mountain lion taken under these circumstances. For more information on mountain lion depredation, visit - www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Mammals/Mountain-Lion/Depredation. ****additional regulations apply in other regions of California.**



If a **bear** has been found to have caused livestock depredation, CDFW may issue a depredation permit outside of the bear hunting season. This permit requires evidence of bear damage or destruction, non-lethal efforts to avoid depredation (e.g. removing food or bone attractants; hazing, motion lights, use of guard dogs, installing electric fencing), and proper disposal of livestock or animal carcasses. Furthermore, “The Department may, at its discretion, add terms and conditions to the permit necessary to protect wildlife and ensure public safety.”

Furthermore, Section 4181.1 of the Fish and Game Code states; “that any bear that is encountered while in the act of inflicting injury to, molesting, or killing, livestock may be taken immediately by the owner of the livestock or the owner's employee if the taking is reported no later than the next working day to the Department and the carcass is made available to the Department.” For more information on Black Bear depredation, go to <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Mammals/Black-Bear/Depredation#572681130-potential-conflict-and-depredation>.

If a **coyote** is actively harassing your livestock, you can take immediate lethal measures of protection. Additionally, coyotes can be taken with a valid hunting license, and all hunting regulations must be followed. There is no season or bag limit for coyotes. If wolves are known to be in the area, it is recommended that you work with USDA-WS on any efforts to control coyote populations.



Ravens prey on newborn livestock and can also impact ranching operations. The species is protected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. There are some management options that can reduce conflicts, including the removal of inactive nests, however lethal removal of ravens requires a USFWS depredation permit. Active nests may only be removed with a Special Purpose permit which is also obtained by the USFWS.

Reference:

1. Tools for California Livestock Producers to Discourage Wolf Presence, Guidance for Suspected Wolf Depredation, and Wolf Legal Status. CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE – JUNE 2017.
2. California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Human-Wildlife Conflicts: Mountain Lions – Preventing Conflicts, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Wildlife.CA.gov. Accessed 7 Aug. 2025.

CDFW RESOURCES

Special thanks to CDFW for assistance in updating this document and providing accessible public resources.

- <https://wildlife.ca.gov/HWC>
- <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Mammals/Black-Bear>
- <https://wildlife.ca.gov/conservation/mammals/gray-wolf>
- <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Mammals/Mountain-Lion/Depredation>

This resource is courtesy of University of CA Cooperative Extension. For questions contact:
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