

Chair Witt and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on HB 2728. I appreciate you taking the time to consider all the testimony you have had on this topic over the years. It is clear, this topic has a lot of viewpoints.

Here are my viewpoints. I have raised livestock my entire life. I have been employed as a government trapper, dealing with coyotes primarily. Also, I was in charge of the predator programs at the department of agriculture (ODA) for over 25 years, again, mostly coyote focused, until the big canines wandered across the border from Idaho.

I grew up in Union County and have returned here after 19 years working in Salem at ODA. I spent a total of 31 years with ODA. My experiences with predation started early with our chicks getting eaten by raccoons as a kid, and later, a calf being killed by coyotes. As I calve now, predation and protection of my calf crop is always on my mind and drives many day to day decisions. I can guarantee, thinning out the predator populations prior to young of the year being born works, and has little, if any long term impact on the population.

My years as a predator control agent started early. My first job was to catch and dispatch starlings that came to our valley when the cherries became ripe. I did this several summers, starting at 17 years old. I then spent 3 summers keeping predators out of several thousand sheep grazing their way across Hells Canyon area, where bears, cougars and coyotes followed. Coyotes were by far the specie responsible for the ongoing sheep harassment and killing at night. Work took me to Harney County, dealing with coyote problems primarily. It was common then to cut down the numbers in December thru March to help the ranchers have fewer problems, and to assist deer and antelope survival. Over 700 coyotes were removed annually around cattle herds and the pelts were all salvaged and sold. More than once, we observed coyotes eating on calves as the mother was birthing.

At ODA I was in charge of negotiating annual work plans and cooperative agreements with Wildlife Services. These were my duties for most of my career. When the first wolf showed up (B45), I was the livestock production voice in all the plans, agency meetings and formation of strategies. This was very rewarding and at retirement, ODFW awarded me with special recognition and a plaque for all my work bridging the gap between wildlife management and livestock production.

In summary, my experience is long and broad, with high level observation and application. In my experience, these principles do reduce the number of predation on vulnerable prey at critical times of year.

*Reducing populations just prior (January/February/March) to births of cattle, elk, deer and antelope does reduce predation, especially if the coyote numbers are high. The highest mortality loss of deer is in those months by coyote predation as they are weak and at times in high snow areas where coyotes have the advantage.

*Coyotes breed in January so the research showing increased production when population reduction occurs does not apply as the remaining coyotes are already bred primarily for that year, so they are not capable of producing more. If the reduction was in November, then it could apply.

*The coyote population is not suffering from insufficient numbers, they are adaptable, resilient, and persist in great numbers, even with liberal removal annually.

I would ask the committee to look at the bigger picture and see that these events are local and valuable for many reasons, of which many cannot understand or comprehend, but never the less, they are serving a valuable local purpose. As a producer and professional, please don't remove this tool from the tool box. Please do not pass HB 2728 out of committee.