

Support for 7 to 1 ratio in Wolf Depredations Compensation
John Williams
Wolf Committee Co-Chair Oregon Cattleman's Association
Jan 2023

With the wolves expanding to many areas of Oregon, livestock producers need relief from the economic devastation they are enduring as wolves impact nearly every aspect of their operation. Wolves kill livestock as a normal action of their lives. They kill to eat, they kill to train their young and they sport kill. Ranchers many times only find 1 in 8 of the carcasses (Oakleaf etal). In the process of killing, the wolves traumatize the cattle in the group that are involved in the event. Normal hunting method includes running down their prey. At times (Cows defending their young or when the herd is cornered) livestock will fight. Either way as multiple events occur most if not all of the herd becomes traumatized (Cooke etal).

The Effect of the losses to the producer both increase the producer's direct costs of doing business and reduces the revenue received in those businesses thereby negatively affecting both sides of their balance sheet. The list of costs includes but are not limited to depredations, reduced weight gain for calves, weight loss by cows, conception rate reductions and management costs. The first four are lost income to the producer because of reduced performance or physical loss of the stock (both calves and cows are reported to be lost). The last item, management costs, encompasses a large group of issues that cause increased cost of operation. Management issues can be broken down into costs of implementing non-lethal activities to attempt to mitigate the impact of the wolf's presence; management costs due to implementation of government regulations and management plans; increased costs of livestock handling, management and management; increased costs through injury and death of livestock; and the loss of range access because the wolf presence in given places makes it unwise to run livestock in that specific area of range (Lehmkuhler, Williams, J.)

The losses are not just economic, they are also emotional and social. Management costs relating to the expected non-lethal are both time and money. The time issue becomes critical as ranchers work to protect their herds, losing family time and time away from their normal ranching activities.

Ranchers feel abandoned by the implementation of the Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (Wolf Plan). PHASE I is the conservation phase, PHASE II, transitional phase, and PHASE III is the management phase. When the wolf plan was written the ranchers felt that when they got to PHASE III, emphasis would be on management and controlling the losses that they endured while in the first two phases.

The Oregon wolf conservation and management plan states in Chapter IV, page 33..... "The Wildlife Policy (ORS496.012) directs ODFW to manage wildlife populations at optimum levels and in a manner consistent with the primary uses of the lands and waters of the state." ORS 496.004 defines "optimum level" as "...wildlife population levels that provide self-sustaining species as well as taking, no consumptive, and recreational opportunities". In addition, ORS 610.055 directs that appropriate measures must be taken to assist farmers, ranchers and others in resolving wildlife damage, and that federal, state, county and local government should cooperate in efforts to control wildlife damage. In the case of damage, wildlife is defined to mean fish, wild birds, amphibians, reptiles, feral swine (as defined by the Oregon Department of Agriculture) and other wild mammals (ORS 496.004). Combined, these policies mandate that this Plan effectively address wolf-livestock conflict at a variety of scales, from industry-wide to individual producers."

This commitment in the Wolf Plan is not occurring causing ranchers to lose faith in wolf management in Oregon. The long process of investigations, evaluations of non-lethal, and onerous reporting requirements that lead to potential lethal take decision is deterring ranchers from even getting involved. Especially when a lethal kill permit is given, it has so many restrictions attached that it is ineffective.

Add to the ineffective implementation of the Wolf Plan, the difficulty in actually getting a confirmed kill and the rules and regulations being added to the Wolf Plan by ODFW staff, wolf compensation only covers non-lethal and the depredations found and deemed a confirmed or probable kill or injury. There is very seldom much money left for the missing livestock and do not even cover the production losses or the increased management costs.

A 7 to 1 ratio of compensation for confirmed/probable kill or injuries and eliminating the missing livestock component of the compensation program would be a major step forward for Oregon Wolf management. It would begin to recognize all the various economic losses ranchers are enduring due to the presence of wolves in their operations. It would help encourage ranchers to report potential depredations and participate in the Wolf Plan.

This proposal is not new, Wyoming uses a 7 to 1 ratio in compensation in areas of the state (CH28....). Wyoming is recognizing that ranchers are taking the brunt of the presence of wolves while others are the supporters of wolf presence. Currently many ranchers in Oregon are not participating in the Wolf plan's management, current payments under the compensation program are not worth the effort and the chance of being successful getting through the process and receiving payment. (Steele etal)

In the late 1990's we were told by Carter Neimeyer, wolf expert, that wolves only need two things... an adequate food base and tolerant people. The food base is there for now (wildlife populations are being reduced), the tolerance of ranchers that have been dealing with wolves is very low. This change in the wolf compensation program would be a good first step in increasing their tolerance.

Below is a list of papers that supports this bill. I have included the list and a short description of the paper below. I have attached the whole papers if you want a deeper dive into the research.

Oakleaf J., Mack C., Murry D. EFFECTS OF WOLVES ON LIVESTOCK CALF SURVIVAL AND MOVEMENTS IN CENTRAL IDAHO,

This is the go-to paper we all use to give the 1 on 8 ratio: So you don't have to read it all, the pertinent statement is on page 305. "In the case of the DMA, our detection rate data suggest that this method of compensation would result in payment of one eighth the actual losses to wolves." (Attached)

Cooke R., Cappelozza B., Reis D., Johnson D., Borman M., Williams J., Bohnert D. Special Report----Impact of previous exposure to wolves on and physiological responses of beef cattle following a simulated wolf encounter

This is research conducted at the Burns OSU Experiment Station proving that cattle from a ranch dealing with wolves has stress at a significant level. This basic research is the foundation that rancher's production losses is based on the cattle's experiences with wolves. (Attached)

Lehmkuhler J., Palmquist G., Ruid D., Willging B., Wydeven A. Effects of Wolves and Other Predators on Farms in Wisconsin: Beyond Verified Losses

A paper that discusses the various production losses and issues of wolf presence. An interesting read on why some of the non-lethal doesn't work in Wisconsin. (Attached)

Williams, J. Estimates of Economic Losses to Stock Growers due to the Presence of Wolves in North Eastern Oregon.

A paper I wrote when the wolf plan was being written Estimates of Economic Losses to Stock Growers due to the Presence of Wolves in North Eastern Oregon /updated. Note the prices are out of date. The current prices would put the per head about \$300 per head. Most important part of this paper is the description of the various losses noting that the dead livestock are actually the smallest loss. Unofficially peer reviewed. Published locally in Wallowa County. (Attached)

Steele J., Rashford B., Foulke T., Tanaka J., Taylors D. Wolf (Canis lupus) Predation Impacts on Livestock Production: Direct Effects, Indirect Effects, and Implications for Compensation Ratios

This is an excellent paper from the Journal of Rangeland Ecology and Management that points out that the Wyoming 7 to 1 ratio is not large enough.

Abstract: A Growing wolf (*Canis lupus L.*) populations in the US Rocky Mountain Region have increased conflicts between livestock production and wolf conservation. Given that the costs of large carnivore conservation are disproportionately borne by local livestock producers, the United States uses compensation for wolf damage to reduce conflicts and mediate negative attitudes toward the predators. Current compensation programs, however, only consider the direct effects of wolf predation. Indirect effects, such as wolf effects on weaning weights, and conception rates, may also reduce profitability. By not including indirect wolf effects, compensation programs may systematically undercompensate ranchers. We use a stochastic budget model of a representative cow-calf ranch in northwest Wyoming to estimate the economic impact of both direct (death loss and injured calves) and indirect effects (decreased weaning weights, decreased conception rates, and increased cattle sickness) of wolf predation. Our results suggest that short-run (i.e., year-to-year) financial impacts of wolf indirect effects may be as large as or larger than the direct effects. Including indirect effects implies that the compensation ratio (i.e., number of calves compensated per confirmed depredation) necessary to fully offset the financial impacts of wolves would need to be two to three times larger than current 7:1 compensation ratio used in Wyoming. (Attached)

REGULATIONS: CH28 Wyoming Compensation Law..... WS 23 wyoming law

The wolf 7 to 1 ratio is on page 28-6 of CH28 On page 6 it references WS 23 so I included the important part of that law as well. (Attached)

Missing and Depredation of Livestock, November 2021, John Williams

This document is the estimate I wrote for Rep Levy in fall of 2021 (Attached)

Wolves —A Primer for Ranchers, J. Williams, D.E. Johnson, P.E. Clark, L.L. Larson, and T.J. Roland

Basic wolf research written by the cadre of researchers as I retired so that what we had learned by 10 years of research was not lost. Published as peer reviewed by Oregon State University. Not

directly related to this topic except towards the end it references research we conducted, proving that cattle are significantly stressed when wolves are living among livestock. (Attached)

Carey, J. 2011. Comparability of Confirmed Wolf Depredations to Actual Losses Wolves Denning in Calf/yearling Core Areas. Catron County Wolf Interaction Investigator. Catron County Board of Commissioners. pp. 32.

Many ranchers feel they will go out of business, not from confirmed/probable wolf-livestock losses but from the ratio of losses as it is felt that for every confirmed wolf depredation there are seven (7) more that are not found and confirmed. Our hypothesis is that the presence of wolves denning in calf core areas equal more than seven (7) depredations for each confirmed wolf/livestock depredation. Note that wolves select denning sites based on easy prey (livestock). Indicators are that when wolves den in calf core areas the ratio of confirmed losses to true losses grows expediently beyond the numbers suggested in a 2003 USFWS study by John Oakleaf.

Sommers A., C. Price, C. Urbigkit, & E. Peterson. 2010. Quantifying Economic Impacts of Large-Carnivore Depredation on Bovine Calves_Journal of Wildlife Management 74(7):1425-1434.

Our 6.3 to 1 wolf depredation compensation factor for the allotment was conservative compared with the 81 ratio of calves killed by wolves to calves found killed by wolves estimated in Idaho ([Oakleaf et al. 2003](#)). Our wolf depredation compensation factor was higher than the grizzly bear depredation compensation factor, likely because wolf depredations are harder to find and confirm than grizzly bear depredations ([Bjorge and Gunson 1985](#)).