

February 14, 2025

SB 777

Chair Golden, Vice Chair Nash and Committee Members,

It is always an honor and a privilege to provide testimony on important issues affecting Oregonians. I would like to express my full support for Senate Bill 777, which provides compensation for injury to livestock or working dogs under the wolf depredation compensation and financial assistance grant program. This compensation, based on fair market value, is set at a 5:1 ratio for livestock and 1:1 for working dogs.

It is important to consider factors that are not easily measured but significantly impact livestock operations. These include conception rates, body condition scores (BCS), weight loss, and mental stress within a herd under constant harassment from increased wolf activity. Cattle producers take pride in managing their herds quietly and efficiently to mitigate these challenges.

Proper herd management is intensive. Cattle are ideally brought to the sale yard at an optimal body condition score maintained throughout their lives, neither too fat nor too thin. When a cow's BCS falls to 3 (compared to the optimal 5-6 out of 9), the cost to restore her to optimal condition increases significantly during the winter months. Additional protein, mineral supplements, and increased feed are primary expenses associated with raising underweight cattle.

The financial impact of wolf depredation is evident in the loss of a single calf, valued at nearly \$2,000 in the fall and winter market. However, hidden costs are equally significant. The presence of an apex predator sharing space with slower, more vulnerable prey animals results in increased feed expenses for weight gain, additional labor for riders to gather and move cattle, more time spent handling cattle during weaning and vaccinations, and the need to raise or purchase replacement cows due to poor conception rates. Furthermore, the loss of genetic value developed through years of breeding programs cannot be overlooked.

In conclusion, Senate Bill 777 provides essential support to livestock producers facing the challenges posed by wolf depredation, ensuring they receive fair compensation for both visible and hidden losses.

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