

Testimony  
Of  
John Williams  
Oregon Cattleman's Association Wolf Committee Co-chair  
SB777

I am John Williams, rancher from Wallowa County and I am eastern Oregon co-chair of the wolf committee for the Oregon Cattleman's Association. I support the passage of SB777.

With the wolves expanding to many areas of Oregon, livestock producers need relief from the economic devastation and the emotional stress they are enduring as wolves' impact nearly every aspect of their operation. The best way to accomplish this is clean up the wolf compensation program and I believe this bill does just that. This bill, in its present form is a compromise that recognizes that non-lethal is important to the process of managing wolves, it recognizes the difficulty of proving what is missing (as in removing the payment for missing livestock). In its place the ranchers are asking to be paid a multiplier for each confirmed or probable wolf depredation of livestock.

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 as identified in the Oakleaf study from Idaho. In the process of killing, the wolves traumatize the cattle that are involved in the event. The normal hunting method of a wolf includes running down their prey. Sometimes a cow will not run, but turn and fight to defend their young or must fight when the herd is cornered. Either way as multiple events occur, most if not all, of the herd becomes traumatized.

The Effect of the losses to the producer both increase the producer's direct costs of doing business and reduces the revenue received. The list of costs includes: depredations, reduced weaning weight of calves, weight loss by cows, conception rate reductions and management costs. The first four are lost income to the producer because of reduced cattle performance or physical loss of the animals. 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; increased costs through injury and death of livestock; and the loss of range access because the wolfs' presence in given places makes it unwise, to run livestock in that specific area of range.

To put some context to these losses for a rancher, taken from a paper I wrote in 2010 ..... and updated in 2015. For a rancher with 400 head of cattle, the presence of wolves creates a reduced conception rate of about 10%, which costs a rancher \$134.00 per head; Reduced weaning weight, \$46.00; Depredations \$50.00; reduced cow weight, \$57.00 AND increased management costs \$93.00, this all totals up to \$380.00 per head for each and every cow impacted by the wolves. That adds up to \$152,000 for a rancher running 400 head.

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. This bill would help replace some of the economic losses and would at least mitigate some of the lost time and stress relating to their cattle management.

I want to relate to you a conversation I had with a college/rancher last month. I was picking up some of my own hay I had bought from a mutual friend, he stopped is hay truck when he saw me and ask if I was still "rangling the wolf issue". He went on to tell me that he had turned out 277 cows in the spring, ran them on the northern side of the Wallowa Valley where he and his family had operated for at least 2 generations. He gathered this fall and when he pregnancy tested them he found 51 of them open. I ask what normal was before wolves and he indicated 14 or 15. Doing the math here, 51

open of 277 cows is 18%, normal is 5%. That is an increase of 13%, ground truthing the studies that use 10% conception rate reduction.

Ranchers are at risk of losing their ranches, their way of life, their homes and their incomes. The production losses due to the presence of wolves, which are much larger than the dead and injured animals all leads to significant economic and emotional stress to the ranching community.

We need to be able to have the ability to protect ourselves, our families and our private property, including our livestock, from wolves. When that fails the ranchers need compensated for their losses. This bill is a step in the right direction.

Thank you for the opportunity for ranchers to explain the impacts of the presence of wolves on our lives.