

Options for California Livestock Producers to Discourage Wolf Presence and Guidance for Suspected Wolf Depredation

With the establishment of wolves in northern California, it is important for livestock producers and the public to understand current laws and regulations regarding protections for gray wolves, whom to contact and what procedures you may need follow if you encounter a wolf or experience what is believed to be wolf activity involving livestock.

Available Options to Discourage Wolf Presence (Non-lethal/Non-injurious harassment)

Habitat Modification – Make your property less attractive to wolves.

- Remove diseased or dying animals from areas where they can attract wolves. Do not leave these animals out in the open.
- Dispose of carcasses and bone piles where they are not readily accessible to wolves and other scavengers.
- Fence or pen livestock at night using permanent or portable fencing.

Other Tools – The list below of suggested options are most effective when used in combinations, so that discouragement is consistent rather than sporadic and one type/tool reinforces the effectiveness of another tool.

- Placement of Barriers. This would include fences and/or fladry (a series of cloth flags hung at intervals along a rope or fence line) or electrified fladry. Wolves can be reluctant to cross fladry lines for 30-60 days.
- Hazing. Install flashing lights, triggered by motion sensors, around perimeter of sensitive areas (e.g., calving areas). Lights should be moved regularly to increase effectiveness. Air horns, spotlights, or the use of cracker shells may also be employed. If a livestock producer sees a wolf testing or chasing livestock or in close proximity, they may scare a wolf off by firing shots in a safe manner in the air (not directed toward the wolf), making loud noises or otherwise confronting the wolf provided no bodily harm is done to the wolf.
- Human presence. Consider the use of “range riders” or herders for areas where open range livestock occur or maintaining greater human presence in more localized areas.
- Livestock protection dogs and guard animals. Considerations for use of this tool include; livestock guarding dogs can be effective at alerting people to the presence of wolves but not in actually keeping wolves away, the effectiveness of livestock guarding dogs is dependent on breeding and training, multiple livestock guarding dogs are best, wolves will see dogs as competition which may result in injury or death of the dog(s) consequently dogs should not be allowed to chase wolves for that reason.
- Consider modification of future livestock management practices

Suspected Wolf Depredation on Livestock

Reports of possible wolf depredation on livestock, livestock guarding and herding dogs, or other domestic animals should be reported to California Fish and Wildlife, U. S. Fish and Wildlife, and USDA/APHIS Wildlife Services (see below). To protect the scene prior to agency response, please:

- Avoid walking in and around the area
- Keep dogs and other animals away to avoid disturbance to the area
- Place a tarp or other cover over the carcass
- If possible, use cans or other objects to cover tracks and scats that can confirm the depredating species.

Gray Wolf Status

Gray wolves are listed as an endangered species under both the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) and as such there are prohibitions against lethal take and harassment for the species. The ESA defines "take" to mean "to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct." Harass is further defined as "an intentional or negligent act or omission which creates the likelihood of injury to wildlife by annoying it to such an extent as to significantly disrupt normal behavioral patterns which include, but are not limited to, breeding, feeding or sheltering" (50 CFR 17.3). Under CESA, "Take" (defined as hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill) is prohibited except through a few limited exceptions (FGC sections 2080.1, 2081 and 2800).

Contacts

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