

LIVESTOCK LOSS DETERMINATION

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Investigation ID: 060118-LAS

Date Investigated: 06/01/18

General Area: Southern Lassen County, private property

General situation and animal information: On June 1, a cow carcass was discovered in a stream within a pasture and wolf depredation was suspected. The landowner notified CDFW at approximately 6:20 PM and staff from USDA Wildlife Services and CDFW investigated the carcass late that evening. Staff from Wildlife Services and CDFW returned to the site on June 2 to complete the investigation.

The animal was an adult cow that was estimated to have died approximately three days earlier. Prior to the investigation, nearly all of its organs and muscles had been consumed. Approximately 70 percent of its hide remained. The remaining hide was in poor condition due to decomposition.

Physical evidence of attack by a predator: Scrapes on the hide and subcutaneous hemorrhaging were found on the cow's right rear leg at the hock. The hemorrhaging indicated the injury occurred while the animal was alive. Because the carcass was several days old and had been nearly completely consumed, most of the cow could not be thoroughly investigated and no other evidence of predation was found. Very little muscle from the other legs was available for investigation.

Evidence that the predator was a wolf: The scrapes and hemorrhaging on the hind portion of a rear leg occurred in an area typically targeted by attacking wolves.

Evidence of wolf presence near the time of the animal(s) death/injury: Both tracks and scat of an unknown number of wolves were present in the immediate vicinity of the carcass. Wolf tracks were also observed in the stream bottom upstream of the carcass and in the adjacent pasture. GPS locations indicated a collared wolf was at or near the carcass from May 28 through June 1. Bear and coyote tracks were also observed near the carcass.

Recent wolf depredation in the same or nearby area: None. One week earlier, CDFW and Wildlife Services investigated two suspected wolf depredations 5-6 air miles away. One was determined to have died of natural causes, and the other was too decomposed and consumed to determine the cause of death.

Cause of death/injury:

Confirmed Wolf

Probable Wolf

Possible/Unknown

Other

Summary: Although the carcass was largely consumed and decomposed, the scrapes and hemorrhaging on the right rear leg were located in a portion of the body typically targeted by wolves. These injuries, as well as evidence of wolves in the pasture near the estimated date of the cow's death, indicate a reasonable likelihood that wolves killed the cow. The cow's death is therefore classified as a probable wolf depredation.