

**State of California
NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY
Department of Fish and Wildlife**



**Report to the Fish and Game Commission
Regarding Findings of Necropsies on Mountain Lions
Taken Under Depredation Permits in 2025**

**Prepared by the Wildlife Health Laboratory
Wildlife Branch, Wildlife and Fisheries Division**

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Submitted in compliance with Section 4807 of the Fish and Game Code

Introduction

In California, mountain lions (also commonly called cougar or puma) are a *specialty protected species* under The California Wildlife Protection Act of 1990. Mountain lions that cause property damage can be lethally taken under a depredation permit pursuant to the California Fish and Game Code (FGC). FGC Sections 4802-4805 provide the process for a livestock owner to report a mountain lion depredation incident, request a depredation permit from the Department, and the process for issuing a depredation permit. A depredation permit may authorize either lethal take of an animal or non-lethal take. Methods of non-lethal take allowed to discourage further depredation by mountain lion(s) include aggressive hazing that does not injure or kill the mountain lion; less than lethal ammunition (beanbags, rubber bullets, cracker shells, rock-salt, paintballs); noise making devices; pursuit with an All-Terrain Vehicle; and/or pursuit with dogs if authorized by CDFW in the non-lethal permit terms and conditions.

In the case where a depredation permit authorizes lethal take, and a property owner or their agent lethally takes a lion, FGC Section 4806 states: “Any person issued a permit pursuant to Section 4803 or 4805 shall report, by telephone within 24 hours, the capturing, injuring, or killing of any mountain lion to an office of the department or, if telephoning is not practicable, in writing within five days after the capturing, injuring, or killing of the mountain lion. At the time of making the report of the capturing, injuring, or killing, the holder of the permit shall make arrangements to turn over the mountain lion or the entire carcass of the mountain lion which has been recovered to a representative of the department and shall do so in a timely manner”.

In cases where a livestock owner, or their agent, encounters a mountain lion in the act of injuring or killing livestock, FGC Section 4807(a) states: “Any mountain lion that is encountered while in the act of pursuing, inflicting injury to, or killing livestock, or domestic animals, may be taken immediately by the owner of the property or the owner’s employee or agent. The taking shall be reported within 72 hours to the department. The department shall investigate the depredation, and, if the mountain lion was captured, injured, or killed, the mountain lion or the entire carcass of the mountain lion which has been recovered shall be turned over to the department. Upon satisfactorily completing the investigation and receiving the mountain lion or the carcass, if recovered, the department shall issue a permit confirming that the requirements of this section have been met with respect to the particular mountain lion taken under these circumstances”.

Regardless of whether the mountain lion is taken pursuant to FGC Section 4806 or 4807, the carcass should be returned to the Department to perform a necropsy on the animal. FGC Section 4807(b) requires the necropsy results to be presented in a report submitted to the Legislature.

The following report contains the necropsy findings for mountain lions taken under the provisions of FGC Sections 4806 and 4807(a) and submitted to the Department during the 2025 calendar year (1 January to 31 December).

Findings

Based on the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) records received from the Wildlife Incident Reporting (WIR) System, the primary reporting tool for issuing depredation permits, and staff at the time of this report, CDFW received 518 reports of mountain lion depredation in calendar year 2025. As required by FGC, CDFW staff investigated each reported depredation incident to confirm damage and if the depredating animal was a mountain lion (as opposed to a different carnivore species). In some of these incidents, it was not possible to confirm damage or that a mountain lion caused the depredation. As part of this investigation, CDFW staff have a conversation with the property owner about the depredation incident and explain the codes, regulations, and policies associated with the depredation permit process. CDFW staff also provide advice and feedback on how to prevent future depredation incidents. If the CDFW investigator confirms the property damages were caused by a mountain lion, and the property owner requests a depredation permit, the Department shall issue a depredation permit authorizing either a non-lethal take, or lethal take, according to Department policies.

CDFW issued 220 mountain lion depredation permits in calendar year 2025 according to the data collected via the WIR. Permits authorizing non-lethal take accounted for 71.8% (n=158) of the depredation permits issued by CDFW, while 28.2% (n=62) of the permits issued were authorized for lethal take, of which 19 mountain lions were taken. CDFW issued the greatest number of permits in January (n=49), May (n=55), and December (n=49) (Figure 1).

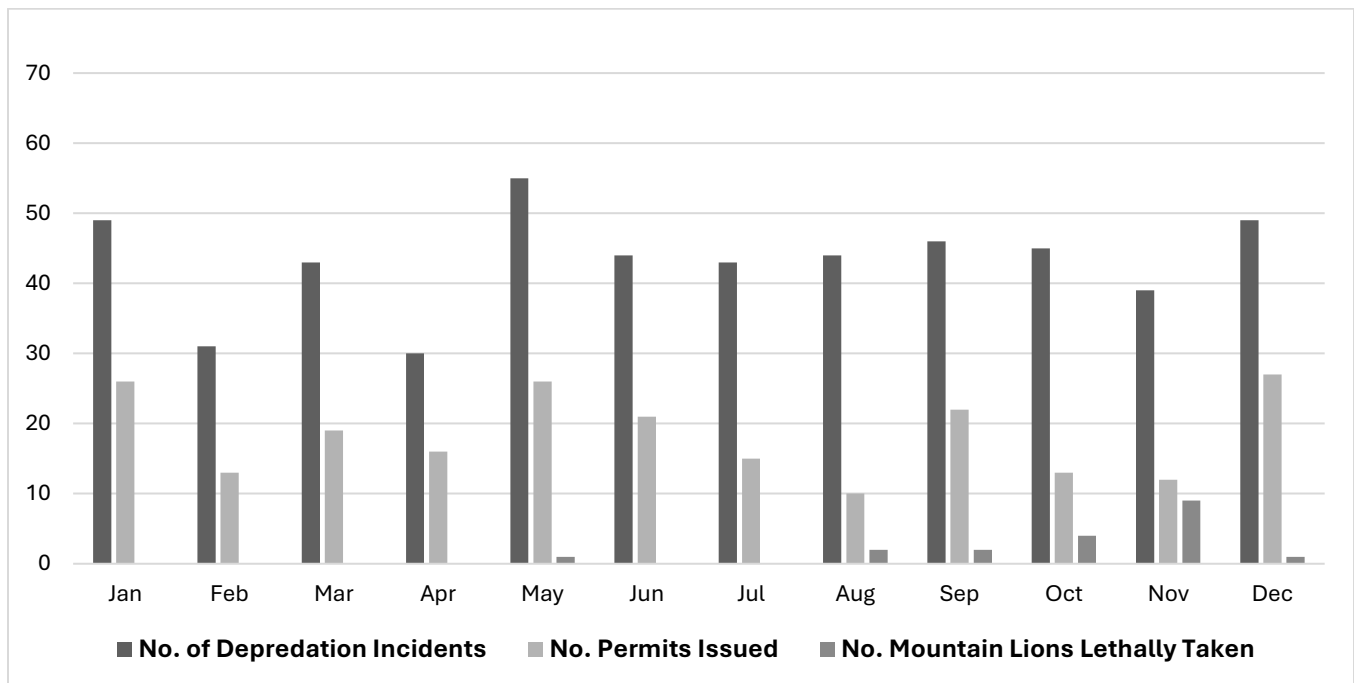


Figure 1. Monthly summary of mountain lion depredation reports in the WIR System, the number of lethal and non-lethal mountain lion depredation permits issued, and the number of mountain lions lethally taken on a permit in 2025.

The reasons for property owners obtaining mountain lion depredation permits varied: 131 (51.2%) of permits issued were for loss of goats, 58 (22.6%) were for loss of sheep, and 67 (26.2%) for loss of other domestic or exotic species (Figure 2). It is important to note that multiple animals of various species are sometimes reported in a single incident. For the seventeen (17) mountain lions necropsied by CDFW, stomach contents that could be identified most frequently contained goat (n=5, 29%) and chicken (n=3, 18%) with other contents also observed (Figure 3).

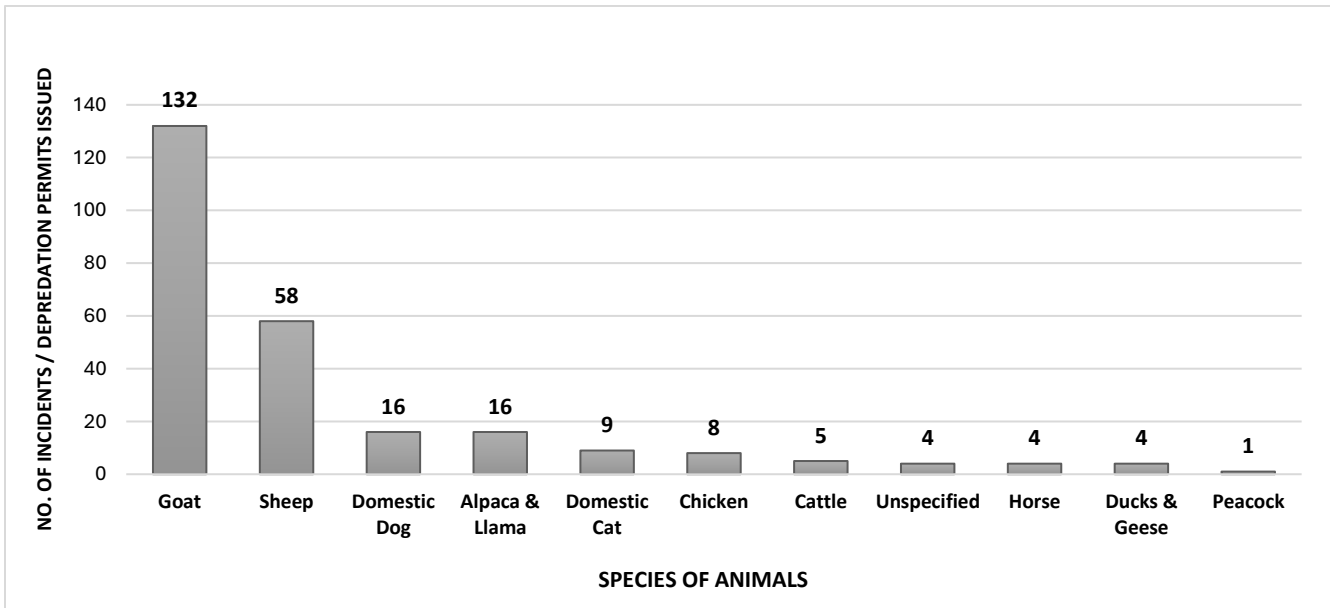


Figure 2. Types of property damage reported (i.e., species of animal(s)) taken by a mountain lion), based upon the number of occurrences, and not the total number of animals reported taken in a single incident.

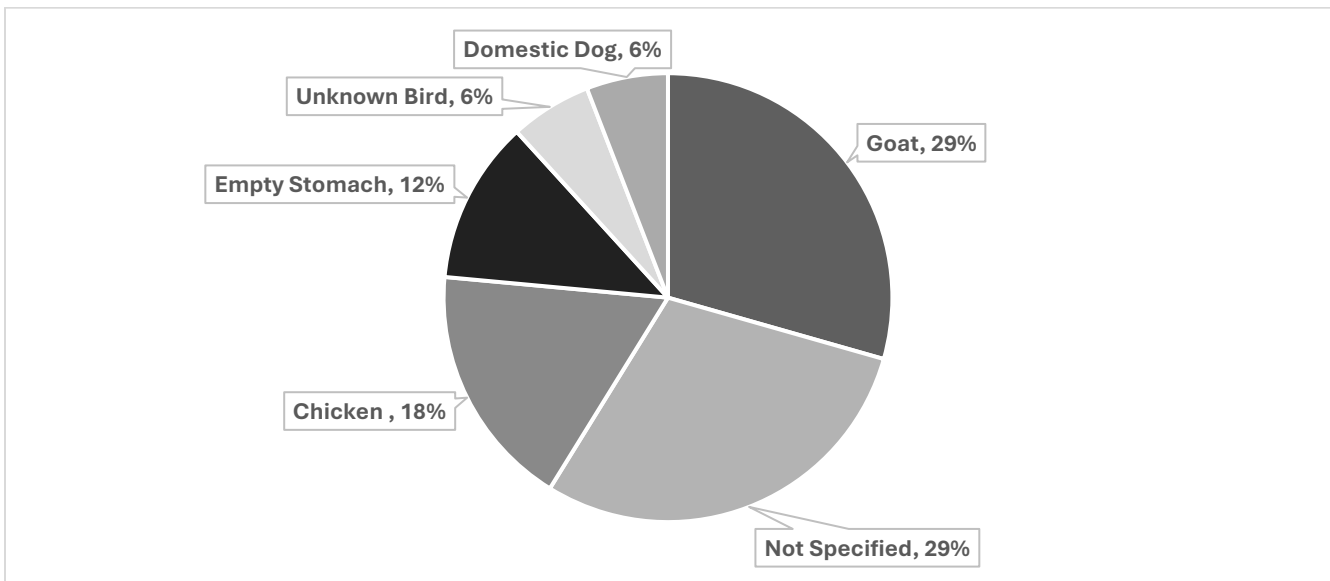


Figure 3. Stomach contents of the 17 depredated mountain lions necropsied by CDFW in 2025. Three (3) mountain lions were not submitted to CDFW for necropsy, and therefore their stomach contents could not be examined.

Twenty (20) mountain lions were reported taken on depredation permits. Seventeen (17) of these mountain lion carcasses were submitted to CDFW staff for necropsy. Three (3) carcasses were unable to be retrieved and were not turned over to CDFW for necropsy. Six (35.3%) of the mountain lions necropsied were male and ten (58.8%) were female. The sex of one other mountain lion was unable to be determined (Table 1). Nine (52.9%) of the mountain lions necropsied were aged as adults (24 months or older); four (23.6%) were sub-adults (13-24 months of age); three (17.6%) were juveniles (12 months or younger) (Table 2); and the age class of one (5.9%) mountain lion was not specified. Most depredation carcasses submitted for necropsy came from CDFW's North Central Region (64.7%, n=11) (Table 3).

Table 1. Sex of 17 of depredating mountain lions that were necropsied by CDFW in 2025.

Sex	Total by Sex
Male	6
Female	10
Unknown Sex	1

Table 2. Ages of 17 depredating mountain lions that were necropsied by CDFW in 2025.

Age Class	Total by Age Class
Juvenile	3
Sub Adult	4
Adult	9
Not Specified	1

Table 3. Origin (region) of the 17 depredating mountain lions that were necropsied by CDFW in 2025.

CDFW Region	Total by Region
North Central	11
Northern	4
Inland Deserts & Mountains	1
South Coast	1