

ODFW Wolf Depredation Investigation Summary

Date: 8/31/2012

County: Baker

General Area: Fish Lake area (USFS)

Situation: On 8/31/2012, a USFS employee reported wolf tracks near the carcass of a dead adult cow on a USFS grazing allotment. ODFW examined the cow the same day.

ODFW findings: Confirmed wolf kill

Evidence of wolf presence in the area? The Imnaha wolf pack utilizes this area regularly during the fall months. There were multiple wolf tracks at the carcass. GPS radio collar data places the Imnaha pack alpha male, OR4, at the location of the cow starting at 9pm on 8/29/2012. Locations collected every 3 hours show that OR4 was present at the carcass for the majority of the next 2 days. Two wolves were heard howling nearby during the investigation and one wolf approached within 100 yards.

Summary of evidence: The carcass lay with its head folded underneath its body in a small creek/ditch. There were no marks of the cow struggling to get up, the cow likely died when it fell. No sign of a chase scene was detected; however visibility was limited due to the investigation being conducted as darkness fell. The intact carcass had been partially scavenged. The hide and muscle had been scavenged from the rectal area, right side hindquarter, abdomen, and ribs. The remainder of the cow was skinned. Premortem hemorrhaging and tissue damage was found on the body behind the right elbow consistent with wolf bite wounds. This is a typical wolf attack location. The cow was estimated to be dead for 2 days which is consistent with OR4's arrival at the scene. There was very little decomposition even around the abdominal cavity which indicates that the rumen had been removed quickly after the death of the cow, before it bloated and affected adjacent tissue. This is the most common site for a wolf to start feeding. It is uncommon for wolves to kill adult cows, but ODFW has confirmed that OR4 and the Imnaha pack have killed several.