

Innaha Wolf Pack Livestock Depredations

Summary of non-lethal efforts (March 3-June 29, 2010)

Russ Morgan, ODFW Wolf Coordinator

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On March 3, 2010 the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) began uploading global positioning system (GPS) radio locations from the alpha male wolf of the 10-wolf Innaha wolf pack. The wolf had been fitted with the GPS collar on February 12, 2010 and location data revealed regular wolf use along private lands in the upper Wallowa Valley. Landowners with livestock were notified of wolf presence. From March 3, ODFW and area livestock producers expended considerable efforts to discourage use of the private land areas by the wolf pack. The following is a summary of these preventative and non-lethal actions expended by ODFW and area landowners in response to wolf activity in the upper Wallowa Valley:

1. Hazing/Harassment:

Non-injurious harassment: On the night of March 26, Karl Patton used non-injurious harassment on Innaha pack wolves by firing a gun to scare the wolves from his cattle pen near his house. ODFW confirmed the event the following day. On several occasions from March through May, area landowners observed wolves near cattle and the wolves moved away in response to the vehicle.

Non-lethal Injurious Harassment (ODFW): On March 23, ODFW used non-lethal injurious harassment on Innaha pack by aggressively hazing with a helicopter. In this event, 9 wolves were effectively moved away from a livestock inhabited area of the upper valley. Aerial hazing also occurred by ODFW on March 31 and April 23 from fixed wing aircraft. These efforts were intended to discourage wolf activity near the valley edge and move wolves south to livestock-free forested areas. On April 7, 8, and 9, ODFW successfully hazed wolves from private land with livestock by firing cracker shells. On May 8, 2010, ODFW hired a temporary employee to monitor radio-collared wolf activity on a near nightly basis in the upper valley and haze wolves when found in close proximity to livestock. On 3 occasions in May, the employee used shell crackers to haze the wolves and on several other occasions the employee used his vehicle to prevent wolves from moving toward private lands.

Non-lethal Injurious Harassment (Private): Two landowners were authorized to conduct injurious harassment as follows.

March 26, 2010. Following an event where at least 6 wolves of the Innaha pack were found in a calf pen near the home of Karl Patton (and successfully hazed using a firearm), ODFW issued rubber bullets to Mr. Patton and instructed him on their use. To date, no rubber bullets have been used.

May 13, 2010. ODFW authorized Scott Shear to chase and haze (using a firearm) a single wolf away from his livestock. The wolf was spotted during daylight hours and was successfully hazed without injury.

2. Burial/Removal of Dead Livestock:

On March 25, Karl Patton buried a dead adult cow carcass (died of non-wolf related causes) at the advice of ODFW. The following night, the wolves returned and dug up and consumed an estimated 40% of the buried carcass – on the same night they came into his calf pen. To reduce the attraction of his property to the wolves, Mr. Patton then used heavy equipment and a dump truck to dig up the remaining portion of the cow carcass and haul it to another pit several miles from his property.

At the request of the Oregon Cattlemens Association (OCA) Wolf Coordinator (Childers) and the assistance of the Wallowa County Commission, an agreement was reached with the Enterprise landfill to take livestock carcasses from upper valley landowners experiencing problems with wolves. This courtesy was extended to upper valley producers only and was done to give area producers an effective off-property repository for dead livestock and reduce the attraction to wolves.

On 4/19/10 Tom Schaafsma assisted a neighbor (Mike Coppin) with the burial of a dead adult cow carcass that was believed to be an attractant to wolves.

On June 29, 2010 ODFW manually removed a very large carcass pile on the Triple creek Ranch at the request of Scott Shear. The old, exposed bones had served as an attraction for the Imnaha pack wolves as they had been documented in the area on several occasions throughout the winter and spring. ODFW had agreed to assist with the removal of the pile in May, but weather conditions (wet) prevented it until June 29.

3. Fladry:

On May 20, ODFW issued turbo-fladry to one sheep grower (Krebs) located along the west edge of the Imnaha pack home range. The fladry was enough to construct two night corrals solely for the purpose of preventing wolf depredations of his sheep.

4. Radio Monitoring/Increased Vigilance:

Radio telemetry receivers were issued to three landowners as a means of detecting if wolves were present in the area of private land livestock operations. The radios have non-directional antennas and cannot be effectively used to determine exact location of radio-collared wolves, but rather aid in determining presence of the wolf pack. Telemetry receivers were issued to; 1) Karl Patton – March 26 following his calf pen incident, and 2) Scott Shear – March following several detections in the Kinney Lake area near his livestock, and 3) Tom Birkmaier – May 7 following the Lathrop depredation (Tom agreed to help monitor the area for a number of area landowners). On March 26 ODFW also issued telemetry equipment to Wildlife Services agent (Riggs) on so that he could detect wolves if in the valley. Riggs monitored wolf activity in the valley on a near-daily basis through April and on several occasions moved wolves away from private lands and livestock.

Beginning March 3, ODFW conducted aerial monitoring of the radio-collared pack on a 1-2 week basis through May. These flights were conducted to upload GPS location data from the alpha male and to locate the three other radio collars using conventional telemetry. From March 28 through April 11, the upper valley area was monitored using ground based telemetry on a nightly basis for the purpose of detecting wolves if they entered the valley and alerting landowners if wolves were found near livestock.

Following the May 5 depredation (Lathrop), many producers in the upper Wallowa Valley and the Zumwalt area began checking their cattle on a near-daily basis. In addition, Lathrop spent 5 consecutive nights with his cattle to prevent further losses. Another landowner (Patton) documented 1-3 additional hours per day spent looking for wolf activity around his cattle through May 14. While ODFW does not have exact tabulation of increased vigilance efforts by all landowners, it has been evident to ODFW that nearly all of the area landowners with regular wolf activity have greatly increased monitoring efforts as a result of Imnaha pack wolf activity. Due to the remoteness of some of these herds (travel costs), the increased effort has been a financial burden to some.

5. Radio Activated Guard (RAG) Box:

RAG boxes were deployed on two private ownerships; 1) Karl Patton – Following his March 26 wolf situation ODFW installed a RAG box on the calf pen boundary to discourage further use of the area by wolves, and 2) Scott Shear – on April 30 a RAG box was installed on the dead carcass area (that could not be cleaned up by ODFW due to weather) to discourage wolf use.