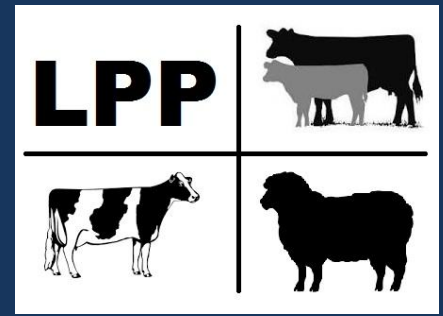


Cattle and Sheep Best Management Practices to Reduce Livestock Predation



Although Best Management Practices (BMPs) cannot be standardized to fit all livestock operations and cannot be expected to always eliminate predation on livestock, there are practices that can help to reduce the impact of predation. Once predation starts, it can be very difficult to stop without the removal of the predators involved. BMPs are most effective before predation begins or once the offending predators are removed. The Livestock Protection Program may withhold mitigation in cases where there is a lack of effort to implement appropriate BMPs.

Handling of Deadstock

A Best Management Practice can be a process, activity, method or technique that are generally understood to be more effective in reaching a certain outcome or accomplishing a task than other conventional process, activities, methods or techniques... A Best Management Practice (BMP) is an approach to livestock production that seeks to minimize predation on a herd while taking into account the surrounding environment, including the wild animals within it. A BMP provides cattle [and sheep] producers with a toolkit of options to assist with the protection of livestock from Predation.

Excerpt from "Wild Predator Loss Prevention"

Boneyards (areas where carcasses are dumped for scavengers) have been shown to be huge attractants to predators and are thought to habituate predators to eating livestock. When located close to winter feed grounds or lambing/calving areas they can be especially problematic by bringing predators in close proximity to livestock. BMPs recommend collecting carcasses as soon as possible and using methods of sanitary disposal. Local bylaws vary on deadstock disposal, be sure to check with your municipality or region. Baiting problem predators with livestock carcasses is not recommended because it can have the same impact as boneyards. If necessary, the carcasses should be monitored carefully and removed when problem predators are removed. Wildlife carcasses are better when available.

Composting

Composting is often considered the easiest and most effective method of sanitary disposal. It can be done in any weather conditions with readily available equipment as long as some thawed material such as manure is available to start the composting reaction. Composting can be done by simply laying deadstock on a pile of straw, hay or woodchips and layering things such as manure, old hay, silage and dirt on top of the carcass. The pile should be turned about three times in three month intervals and can then be used for fertilizer.

Deep Burial

This method can be effective against canine scavenging but can be difficult to get deep enough to deter bears and once a pit is open can draw in other predators. It is recommended to make the pit deep enough to be able to cover it with 1 metre of dirt. It can also be beneficial to put a layer on manure on the carcass before covering with dirt. Preparation of burial pits needs to be done before the onset of winter to ensure ground is soft enough to dig.



"Mitigation is not only predator removal. Some losses can be prevented with improved management."

~Mark Boyce, University of Alberta



Handling of Predator Kills

When a probable predator kill is discovered it should be verified as soon as possible to determine if it is a predator kill and what type of predator is involved. The LPP or Wildlife Specialist can advise on how to handle the carcass. Results of mitigation are often time sensitive.

Maimed and Hurt Livestock

Maimed and hurt livestock should be brought in to discourage further attacks and a strategy discussed with the LPP Coordinator or Wildlife Specialist. Consult a veterinarian as needed.

Observation

When living in the proximity of predators, livestock producers need to continuously be aware of the local predators' habits and track their movements and locations. The presence of range riders or regular supervision can be very helpful to know what is going on with your livestock and to identify when problems are beginning. If mitigation is necessary, the more a producer knows about the habits and movements of the problem wolves or coyotes the easier the job of the Wildlife Specialists.

Also, it is very beneficial to know your neighbours and develop strong communication so you can work together to prevent predation. You can share information on the predators in the area and ensure husbandry practices deter predation.

Have you considered?

- Location of compost or burial site
- Materials needed for composting and deep burial
- Timely removal of dead livestock
- Burying dead livestock in a deep pit (recommended minimum of 1 metre of soil)
- Regular riding and supervision of livestock
- Track predator movements, habits and locations
- Coordinate and communicate with neighbours



Other Tools

There are other tools that producers have used to help prevent predation on livestock. Although they may not work in all instances, they have been found to be helpful under certain conditions.

Dogs, Donkeys, Llamas

Livestock Guardian Dogs have been used successfully when the livestock are in groups that the dogs are able to patrol. Producers using guardian dogs need to have an understanding of what breeds to use, how to raise them, and under what conditions they can operate. It is advisable to seek the experience of knowledgeable people and seek professional help when training guardian dogs.

Other protection animals such as donkeys, llamas and mules can be useful under certain conditions.

Fencing

Different types of fencing can be useful if the area of concern is small enough to cover. Information on use of electric fencing is available.

Repellants

Repellants such as flagging, bells, radios, night lighting, motion sensors, have also been shown to be helpful under certain conditions.

A **Wildlife Specialist** under the **Livestock Protection Program (LPP)** is qualified to undertake conflict prevention measures and carcass verifications. Wildlife Specialists may conduct control on wolves and coyotes, if needed.

Wildlife Specialist duties include:

- conduct verifications;
- recommend management strategies; and
- conduct mitigation solutions for problem predators.

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- Predator deterrents or scare devices like flagging, bells, radios, lights, propane exploders or parked vehicles in the pasture
 - Portable or permanent predator fencing
 - Guardian animals like dogs, donkeys or llamas
 - Location and design of buildings
 - Design of fences and feeding bunks



Best Management Practices Resources & Additional Information

Resources on reducing conflicts

- Stone, S. et al “Livestock and Wolves: A Guide to Nonlethal Tools and Methods to Reduce Conflict.” (2006)
http://www.defenders.org/sites/default/files/publications/livestock_and_wolves.pdf
- Wild Predator Loss Prevention, BC Sheep Federation.
http://www.bcsheepfed.com/files/3914/2119/3462/Wild_Predator_Loss_BMP.pdf
- WPLP Best Management Practices for Cattle, BC Ag Council
<http://www.cattlemen.bc.ca/docs/cattle%20best%20mgmt%20practices%20guide.pdf>
- BC Ministry of Environment – Conservation Officer Service. Wildlife/Human Interaction.
<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/cos/#>

Resources on Composting

- [PDF] Livestock Composting Program -Jeff Porter - Southwest Alberta Conservation Partnership. http://oldmanbasin.org/files/7413/1238/9407/SACP_Composting.pdf
- Webinar: Methods of Disposing of Cattle Mortalities to Reduce Predation (November 2015) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_9HECrMdm0

Resources on Fencing

- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs –Fencing options for predator control <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/sheep/facts/02-053.htm>

Codes of Practice

- Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle
<https://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/beef-cattle>
- Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle
<https://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/dairy-cattle>
- Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep
<https://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/sheep>

The Livestock Protection Program (LPP) is available province-wide to all beef, sheep and dairy producers. It will focus on removing wolves and coyotes that are injuring, harassing or killing livestock. LPP will be available 2016- 2019.

Call 1-844-852-5788