

New Forms For VERIFICATION AND COMPENSATION

Submitted by Cam Hill, Program Coordinator, Livestock Protection Program • Photos from LPP File



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As Program Coordinator for the Livestock Protection Program I daily have the opportunity to speak with ranchers from all corners of the province. I really enjoy that interaction and I often say that cattle ranchers are my favourite class of folks. For the most part, ranchers are characters, people well connected with the land and who are passionate about what they do. Most understand that losing livestock to predators is just something that happens in this business. It's concerning and always takes an emotional toll but if we didn't have stiff backs and broad shoulders then we wouldn't be at this for long.

Those of us involved with the internal cogs of the Livestock Protection Program; myself, the Wildlife Specialists, verifiers, Oversight Committee members and the government folks that support us, work hard on behalf of the producers affected by predator losses and we try to always get things right. We care about what we do!

That's why it is hard when we take a beating from a producer who feels the program is failing them. Out of an average of 400 files a year it only seems to happen once or twice. Often it is because the producer does not understand the limitations imposed upon us by the permit under which we operate the program.

Recently, I had a bit of a prickly conversation with a producer. The conversation started out with the producer's assertion that "Your program is a failure." They were missing a calf and they believed that they would not have suffered the subsequent two injured livestock if we had begun mitigation immediately upon the first report. Unfortunately, there was no current evidence to support that coyotes had killed the missing calf; other than, the believe that coyotes were responsible for killing a calf the previous year, and coyotes were currently yodeling around the area. This year, when the producer reported

the missing calf directly to our Wildlife Specialist, the WS correctly advised that nothing could be done without a carcass, an injured calf or evidence of harassment. Prior to the complaint reaching my ears, our Wildlife Specialist and another verifier spent a good part of the day that followed the initial complaint trying to find the missing calf and/or the injured calf. Their effort was more than what we would normally expect of them; however, we still fell short of meeting the producer's expectations. Before the discussion wound down, the producer also expressed that the program and the government were not doing enough to prevent wildlife conflicts in the first place.

Obviously the frustration level ran high with this individual and after an initial opportunity to vent the conversation became much more productive. After a 45 minute phone discussion with the complainant the atmosphere softened somewhat and I think the producer now has a better understanding of how the program works.

When it comes to predator removal we want to be absolutely confident that we are making the right decision and that any actions taken follow the direction prescribed within the permit and outlined within the LPP Program Plan. Any actions taken by Wildlife Specialists must fit

within the parameters of the BC Wildlife Act unless specifically exempted by our permit. Once a file is opened the decisions to mitigate and/or pay compensation is supported by photos, the Verification and Compensation Application form and relevant notes. These are then forwarded to the Conservation Officer Service and the Ministry of Agriculture's Risk Management Branch as well as the BCCA office.

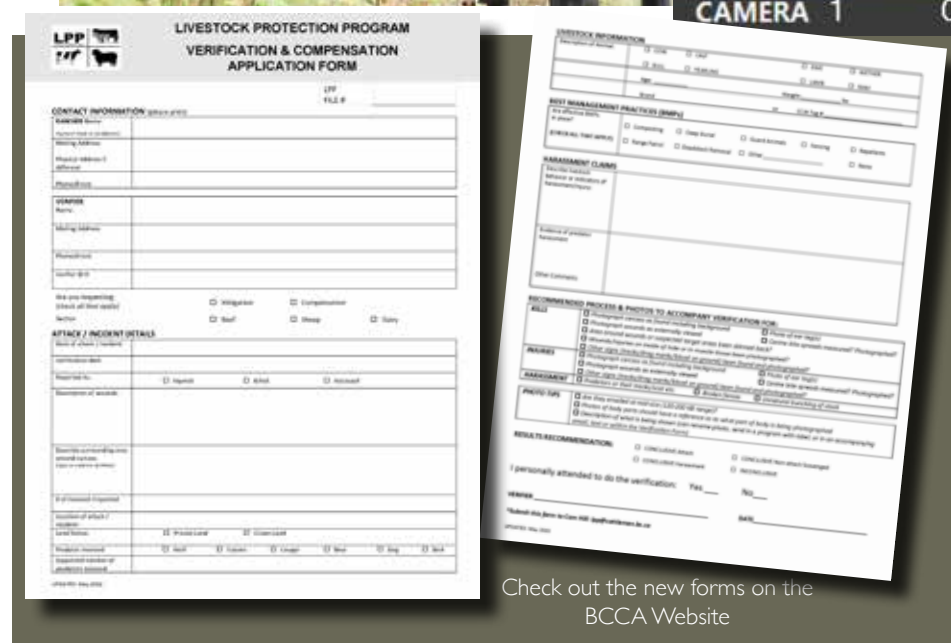
Predator removal can be sticky business in this day and age. Although we strive to have mitigation in place within 48 hours of an incident, that incident has to be correctly documented through photo evidence and ideally the verification form should be completed and received. None of us involved in the field side of the program do this work full time, myself included. Our Wildlife Specialists are trappers who have other occupational responsibilities and some are, like me, ranchers themselves. Lining up a verifier, catching me near a phone and/or a computer and finding an available Wildlife Specialist can be a process. For the most part I am often amazed and impressed at how seamlessly things generally come together. But at times a little patience and understanding is needed.

Those of us involved with the operation of the Livestock Protection

Program are always looking for ways to improve the process. Suggestions are welcome and criticisms are not ignored but should be directed to the Program Coordinator or the BCCA office.

The foundation for a smooth and efficient response to predator conflicts is prompt reporting and getting a good verification done.

A good verification is one that captures the elements needed to confirm predator involvement. Understanding that many verifiers took their training years ago and may be a little rusty on the process, we have made some changes to the Verification and Compensation Application form to help create a better end product and to make the approval process for compensation and/or mitigation quicker and easier. We have added check boxes of some key elements that we like to see when working through the process. The revised form can be downloaded off the BCCA website under the Livestock Protection Program tab.



Check out the new forms on the BCCA Website

Further information about the Livestock Protection Program can be found at

www.cattlemen.bc.ca/lpp.htm

For incidents of cattle or sheep losses, injury or harassment where wolves, coyotes or birds are suspected please call our toll free number 1-844-852-5788.

For incidents involving other wildlife such as bear and cougar please contact the COS RAPP line at 1-877-952-7277.