

Managing the LIVESTOCK PROTECTION PROGRAM



Submitted by Cam Hill, Program Coordinator, Livestock Protection Program



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Livestock Protection Program

It's a team approach that keeps the Livestock Protection Program running smoothly ... and we have a pretty good team! Sure there are a few hiccups from time to time. Livestock, predators, weather, are all complicating factors when it comes to working through the verification process. But often its human effort, or lack thereof, that gets or prevents a win.

So what is a win? What does a successful file look like? Who's involved?

A successful file is one where a producer ultimately receives compensation for a lost animal if warranted and where that offending

predators are removed if deemed appropriate, thus minimizing future losses. It is where the permit requirements are met, and that the program operates with integrity and remains defensible to audits and will stand solid in the face of the current social climate.

Sounds simple enough right? Well let's break the process down and have a look at team member assignments to get that win.

The producer is the first up. His or her responsibility is to be prompt with a phone call to the Livestock Protection Program Hotline or to a verifier or direct to the LPP Program Coordinator. The carcass or injured livestock needs to be secured on site or put somewhere where access is made easy for the next team player, the verifier. A carcass needs to be safe from further ravaging by the offending predator or from scavengers. A couple quick photos snapped by the producer, even though a verifier may be on his or her way out, might just save a fumble further down the line. Any delay here can result in lost evidence, whether it be on the critter its self or in the surrounding area. The producer's efforts will often set the stage for favourable results further on. Although he/she is

the one to ultimately benefit the most, dropping the ball at this early stage will be cause for all the other members to work a little harder to get that win.

Next up is the Verifier. This team member might be the producer performing double duty or may be a neighbor who has taken the verifier training or a Wildlife Specialist. Either way, a star performance here can secure a win. Their job can be simple and straight forward or the verifier may have to dig down deep and pull out all the tricks learned during the verification training. A little extra skinning on the deads, quality photos well labelled, clear paper work and prompt deliver to the next are key to ingredients to success. Farmers, ranchers and trappers don't shake out real high on the list of IT experts but remarkably, these folks do a pretty good job! Sometimes though, availability can be a problem. Even though the program has around 1000 trained verifiers' province wide there are still a few areas without.

The next in line might be referred to as the coach. That's the hat I currently wear as Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator works hard to try and set everything up for a win. He's involved with the training of verifiers

and Wildlife Specialists and does a lot of coaching along the way. Every file gets issued a number and is entered into an excel spreadsheet. The Program Coordinator studies up all photos and verification forms, often requesting additional information and or filling in the gaps himself. An electronic folder is created for storage of all forms, photos and notes around conversations regarding the predator incidents. The photos and information are sorted with all relevant images, documents and comments, sent on up the line to other team members, specifically the BCCA Program Delivery Manager, the Senior Agrologist with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's Business Risk Management Branch and the Conservation Officer Service Inspector assigned to the LPP team. Files involving bears or cougars or crown land mitigation efforts are also copied to the local COS Sergeant in charge of the zone where the incident occurred. A decision is made on predator involvement, generally in collaboration with the Senior Agrologist. If the evidence supports the claim then the compensation process will proceed as will consideration for mitigation efforts. The Program Coordinator strives to make himself available 24/7 all year long, but other obligations occasionally make him unavailable to take phone calls, or answer texts and emails for short periods of time. That can be frustrating for a producer when he or she is leaning over a freshly found carcass and the wolves are howling just inside the treeline.

The Senior Agrologist is a busy guy too. He ultimately has the final say on compensation payments and has already chased livestock values down for cattle and sheep for the previous calendar year for which the 80% compensation value is paid. He stick handles the compensation payment and, if new clients, sends out the Schedule A-1 (Tax Reporting Number) form, that is required to get the ball rolling. He's also dealing with files that are sent to him directly by the COS involving bears and cougar compensation requests. The Livestock Protection Program is just one of the

many programs under his watch.

If the file is a confirmed predator conflict file than a Wildlife Specialist (WS) gets called up. This person needs to be fast on his (or one her provincially) feet and get right into the action. We strive to have this team player attend and set up to mitigate within 48 hours of an incident. A prompt response helps ensure that the right offending predators are targeted. A good WS needs to be skilled and the results of his/her efforts can save the program a lot of dollars in compensation payments down the road. The WS needs to be skilled in predator removal, have a good working knowledge of the BC Wildlife Act and of the privileges and restrictions afforded us by the operating permit. The WS submits invoices for their work and photos of any predators removed along with a Mitigation Report, which summarizes his/her activities, at the termination of the file.

The BCCA Program Deliver Manager is busy compiling information from the Verification and Compensation Application form and the Mitigation form. The results are submitted in report form quarterly to number of government ministries as per operating permit requirements. This extremely valued member of the team keeps the Program Coordinator operating between the lines. She upgrades forms, helps organize training sessions, looks after WS and PC contracts, ensures the verifiers and WS's get paid and strives to keep the program on track and on budget.

The Conservation Officer Service are advisors and pitch hitters. Our Wildlife Specialists at times work closely with the local CO's and each may call on the other to do verifications that they are unable to attend to. The expertise of the CO's is invaluable and often relied upon by all team players. Conservation Officers provide the bulk of the training for our verifier training sessions.

Like any team we are always trying to improve our performance. That's where the LPP Oversight Committee gets involved. This is a very committed group of individuals representing a wide range of knowledge and expertise. Program

oversight involves reviewing permit amendment proposals, file appeals, and changes to program policy and procedure. This group meets at least once annually in person or virtually with several other meetings as required to deal with emerging issues. Regular participants in this group include the BCCA General Manager and/or the Assistant GM, the LPP Program Coordinator, the LPP Program Delivery Manager, past Presidents of the BC Cattlemen's and the BC Sheep Federation, a director of the BC Trappers Association, the Business Risk Management Branch's Senior Agrologist, the manager of their ministry's Agriculture Wildlife Program, their ministry's Beef and Livestock Specialist, the Wildlife Management Specialist (biologist) with the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, and an Inspector for the Conservation Officer Service.

All Livestock Protection Program team members do this work off the corner of their desks, meaning they have many other daily responsibilities as well. These are busy people and busy people get a lot done. We are fortunate to have them all on our Livestock Protection Program team.

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.



Wolf kill



Investigating with little remaining evidence



Evidence is key