

# **Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Adaptive Management Oversight Committee Standard Operating Procedure**

**Title:** Depredation on Domestic Livestock and Pets

**Number:** 11.0

**File Name:** MW SOP 11.Depredation Response.Final.20050430.doc

**Purpose:** This SOP describes IFT response modes to implement when domestic livestock or pets are discovered dead or injured (due to wolf predation) by the IFT, or reported to the IFT by anyone else. It supersedes relevant sections of the 1998 Mexican Wolf Interagency Management Plan (USFWS 1998), and therefore represents, in part, the “Service Approved Management Plan” referenced in the Mexican Wolf Final Rule (50 CFR 17.84(k)).

**Exceptions:** None. Per SOP 2.0, AMOC must approve any exceptions to this SOP.

**Background:** Depredations of domestic animals (e.g. livestock and pets) are an important management concern, as discussed in the Mexican Wolf Final Environmental Impact Statement (USFWS 1996), Mexican Wolf Final Rule (Federal Register: January 12, 1998, Volume 63, Number 7, Pages 1752-1772; or 50 CFR17.84(k)), and the 1998 Interagency Management Plan (USFWS 1998). Therefore, IFT response to depredation reports must be timely, thorough, and consistent, in order to alleviate losses, allay landowner concerns, and minimize future depredations.

## **Procedures:**

Note: Depredation reports that come to another agency or to someone who is not on the IFT, may initially be handled per SOP 10.0. SOP 11.0 provides specific guidance for IFT handling of such reports. If a key IFT member or other contact identified in a Step below cannot be reached, the IFT member attempting contact will find an appropriate surrogate or will act as the surrogate.

**Telephone numbers pertaining to this SOP are on the Project’s list of “Key Contacts.”**

1. Contact information and follow-up.
  - a. Immediately communicate any report of possible wolf depredation on domestic livestock or pets to the IFT at (928) 339-4329.
  - b. The first IFT member contacted will ensure that all other IFT members are aware of the reported incident, as necessary to handle it.
2. The IFT will handle reported incidents as follows:
  - a. For wolf depredations in Arizona on non-tribal lands, the IFT will coordinate with the AGFD IFT Leader to ensure immediate telephone contact with the appropriate person regarding the reported depredation. The IFT will also ensure that the affected party is aware of all processes and timeframes involved in a depredation investigation. If the AGFD IFT Leader is not immediately available, the IFT will coordinate with another AGFD IFT member to initiate follow-up.

- b. For wolf depredations in Arizona on WMAT lands, the IFT will coordinate with the WMAT IFT Leader and proceed as directed.
  - c. For wolf depredations in Arizona on SCAT lands, the IFT will coordinate with the SCAT and proceed as directed. Note: until and unless the SCAT provides permission for AGFD IFT members to access SCAT lands for wolf management purposes, IFT ground support for SCAT will be limited to USFWS and WS members.
  - d. For wolf depredations in New Mexico, the IFT will coordinate with the NMDGF IFT Leader to ensure immediate telephone contact with the person who allegedly suffered the wolf depredation. They will also ensure that the affected party is aware of all processes and timeframes involved in a depredation investigation. If the NMDGF IFT Leader is not immediately available, the IFT will coordinate with the appropriate NMDGF District Officer to initiate follow-up.
3. AMOC intent is for the IFT to respond to all wolf depredation reports by accessing the incident site within 24 hours, and for WS IFT members to be the primary investigators for such incidents. Thus, other IFT members contacted initially will make every effort to reach a WS IFT member to initiate follow-up. However, other IFT members will initiate follow-up as necessary if a WS employee is not immediately available, and may assist WS at the scene or as requested or is otherwise appropriate. These investigations are opportunities for all IFT members to learn investigative techniques and how to interact with the affected parties. **Note: IFT members may not access private land without the landowner's prior approval.**
  4. Arrival at the scene. The first priority for anyone arriving at the scene, or otherwise assisting WS with the investigation, is to protect the scene to minimize damaging evidence as follows:
    - a. WS IFT member immediately available – WS will initiate contact with the affected party to ensure permission for access, visit the scene within 24 hours, secure the scene per Step 5 (below), and proceed with Step 6 (below).
    - b. WS IFT member not immediately available – If WS cannot arrive at the scene within 24 hours of receiving the report, WS will coordinate with the IFT to ensure that:
      - i. Another IFT member will initiate contact with the affected party, visit the scene within 24 hours, and secure the scene per Step 5, below; and
      - ii. Only one IFT member investigates the incident.
  5. At the scene, the first-arriving IFT member will:
    - a. Photograph the carcass (position, wounds, etc.) and the surrounding area.
    - b. Ensure that the carcass is covered by a tarp, with secured edges.
    - c. Preserve observed scat, tracks, or other evidence by covering it to protect against deterioration (e.g. from rain or trampling).
    - d. Monitor for any possible radio-collared wolves in the area.
    - e. Look for sign of wolves and other predators in the area.
    - f. Note presence of other livestock or pets in the area.
    - g. Fill out a depredation report form (Appendix A).
    - h. Scout the surrounding area for possible areas to trap.
    - i. Await arrival of the agreed-upon IFT “incident investigator.”

6. At the scene, the IFT investigator will follow established guidelines to determine the cause of death (Roy and Dorrance 1976, Fritts 1982), based on the available evidence.
  - a. Causes of death are: predation (wolf, coyote, lion, bear, or other), non-predatory, or unknown). Determination of depredation will consider the following criteria (see Roy and Dorrance 1976 for complete guidelines):
    - i. Subcutaneous hemorrhaging associated with wounds on the carcass.
    - ii. Size of the canine spread on the hide.
    - iii. Attack points on the carcass (i.e. wolves and coyotes typically attack the hamstring and armpit area, whereas lions generally attack the back of the neck).
    - iv. Size and extent of bones chewed by the predator.
    - v. Tracks/scat/hair in the area.
    - vi. Disturbed vegetation and terrain in the area, with areas of blood on the ground.
    - vii. Any additional evidence around the site (e.g. poison plants, skinned carcass).
    - viii. Presence or history of wolves or other predators in the immediate area.
  - b. Cause of death will be classified as follows, based on evidence at the site: confirmed, probable, possible, or not a wolf kill. Determination and classification of cause of death does not need to be made at the initial scene of investigation, but should be completed as soon as possible after the on-site investigation has been completed.
7. Reports.
  - a. The IFT Investigator must complete a depredation form (Appendix A) immediately for each depredation investigation, and submit it to the IFT Field Office within two weeks of the investigation.
  - b. A copy of the completed depredation form must be retained in the IFT office.
  - c. Wildlife Services will provide the person who suffered the depredation with:
    - i. Two copies of the completed depredation form (Appendix A), and
    - ii. Information on the Defenders of Wildlife depredation compensation program.

### **Approvals:**

The Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Adaptive Management Oversight Committee approved this SOP on November 24, 2004.

### **References:**

- Fritts, S.H. 1982. Wolf depredation on livestock in Minnesota. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Resource Publication 145.
- Roy, L.D. and M.J. Dorrance. 1976. Methods of investigating predation of domestic livestock: a manual for investigating officers. Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1996. Reintroduction of the Mexican wolf within its historic range in the southwestern United States: final environmental impact statement. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque, New Mexico.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1998. 1998 Mexican Wolf Interagency Management Plan. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

**Appendix A.**

**DEPREDATION REPORT FORM**

Resource Owner: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_ Ranch Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**SITE DESCRIPTION:**

Nearest Town: \_\_\_\_\_ Allotment Name (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_  
Approximate Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
Coordinates: UTMN: \_\_\_\_\_ UTME: \_\_\_\_\_  
Elevation \_\_\_\_\_ Slope \_\_\_\_\_ % Aspect \_\_\_\_\_  
Vegetative Cover: \_\_\_\_\_  
Topography (riparian, S. slope, bench, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_  
General description of area: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date Complaint Received: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Investigated: \_\_\_\_\_

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Land Ownership:  Private  FS  BLM  State  Tribal  Other \_\_\_\_\_  
Type of Animal:  Sheep  Lamb  Bull  Cow  Calf  Horse  Colt  Dog  Other \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of Selected Animal: \_\_\_\_\_  
Damage Type:  Killed  Injured  Harassment  Stillborn  Other \_\_\_\_\_  
Breed \_\_\_\_\_  
Ear Tag # \_\_\_\_\_  
Sex \_\_\_\_\_  
Est. time Since Death or Injury: \_\_\_\_\_  
Estimated Age of Resource \_\_\_\_\_

Are there other livestock in the area?  Y  N Describe (how many, behavior, composition, distance from mortality) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**EVIDENCE:**

Detection method:  Report from owner  Birds  Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
Carnivore Tracks Present:  Mexican wolf  coyote  mountain lion  black bear  other: \_\_\_\_\_  
Scat Present:  Mexican wolf  coyote  mountain lion  black bear  other: \_\_\_\_\_

Carnivores observed in area? Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
Carcass hidden or in the open? \_\_\_\_\_

Carcass covered ?  Y  N  
Carcass moved?  Y  N  
Drag marks present?  Y  N  
Collared wolves in area?  Y  N If yes, then number \_\_\_\_\_  
Blood on vegetation?  Y  N Describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
Apparent point of first feeding: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of Carcass Remaining

- 0-25%---No soft tissue, hide present, disarticulated.
- 26-50%--All organs consumed, all or most of quarters consumed, partial disarticulation.

- 51-75%--All organs and portions of the hind quarters consumed, front quarters and neck intact, articulated.
- 76-100%--some organs consumed, most soft tissue intact, skeleton articulated.

Describe any additional evidence that is discovered in the area:

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Describe hemorrhages and corresponding marks seen while skinning the hide or other abnormalities (Location and type, e.g. claw marks on right hind leg, or canine marks on neck)

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Canine spread (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_ mm

Cause of Damage:

- Confirmed                      Carnivore (list species) \_\_\_\_\_
- Probable
- Possible
- Accident \_\_\_\_\_
- Unknown
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

- Were photos taken of the site?  Y  N    Attached?  Y  N
- Was a veterinarian involved in cause of death determination?  Y  N
- If yes, is a veterinarian report attached  Y  N

**SUMMARY OF INCIDENT** (including preface and actions taken):

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Lead Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_