



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington D.C. 20250

October 1, 2021

Ms. Greta Anderson
Deputy Director
Western Watersheds Project
PO Box 1770
Hailey, Idaho 83333
greta@westernwatersheds.org

Dear Ms. Anderson:

Thank you for your letter of August 4, 2021, to Secretary Vilsack and cosigned by your colleagues regarding work performed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Wildlife Services (WS) program to control wolf depredation in Idaho. Secretary Vilsack asked me to respond on his behalf.

USDA understands that wildlife is an important public resource that is greatly valued by many people and we are committed to its humane management. To that end, our WS program is managed by professional wildlife biologists who work diligently to find practical, humane, effective, and environmentally safe solutions to wildlife problems or conflicts. When possible, WS prefers to use nonlethal methods. However, in some situations—such as that in Idaho—it is necessary to use lethal control methods. While we understand your objections, it is important that our management professionals have access to all available tools to effectively respond to wildlife depredation. As such, we cannot stop using any legal, humane management options, including the lethal removal of juvenile wolves. We assure you that WS personnel work carefully to remove only those animals necessary to protect livestock, other agricultural resources, natural resources, human health and safety, or property.

In Idaho, wolf populations are managed by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG). WS works closely with IDFG to reduce conflicts between livestock and wolves in high conflict areas. Since the beginning of 2021, WS' depredation investigations found that wolves killed 108 livestock. When nonlethal methods proved ineffective, WS removed eight juvenile wolves—four from Boise County and four from Idaho County. This work was conducted in chronic livestock depredation areas and in consultation with IDFG. In both instances, WS determined that removing juvenile wolves would encourage adult wolves to relocate, thereby reducing the total number of wolves requiring removal. Since these control actions, there have been no further livestock depredations in those locations.

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Thank you again for sharing your concerns. A similar letter is being sent to your colleagues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jenny Lester Moffitt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

Jenny Lester Moffitt
Under Secretary
Marketing and Regulatory Programs