



**Livestock Loss Board
Teleconference Meeting
February 19, 2019
Board Meeting
Helena MT

Meeting Minutes**

Livestock Loss Board Members Present:

Elaine Allestad – Chairperson
Jim Cross
Doreen Gillespie
Seth Wilson

Staff: George Edwards – Executive Director

Guests: Gary Burnett – Heart of the Rockies
Dave McEwen – Woolgrowers
Jim Brown – Woolgrowers
Mike Honeycutt – Department of Livestock
Brian Simonson – Department of Livestock

Chair Elaine Allestad called the meeting to order.

Introductions:

- Each board member, board staff and members of the public introduced themselves.

Staff Out of State Travel:

George Edwards has been asked by the State of California extension service to speak at five meetings in their state. The meetings are to help California people dealing with wolves to understand how our programs function. Each board member present voiced support for this trip. Board members identified several items that will benefit our Montana programs. Items included finding funding sources and possibly new loss prevention methods from areas outside of Montana. Board members also mentioned that this is a feather in our cap in that California sought out our program to help them.

Motion: Jim Cross made a motion to assist the State of California with their endeavors. Seth Wilson seconded the motion. **Discussion:** No further discussion was offered. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

Supply & Equipment Purchase:

In order to further clarify board actions from their December 2018 meeting, board members spoke to the motion made at that time. Board members authorized the purchase of a UTV and adding additional loss prevention supplies to the trailer the board owns for this purpose. Doreen Gillespie stated that the use of side-by-side machine enhances the productivity for fence installation and this type of machine is more efficient than a full-size pickup for this purpose. Seth Wilson said the board's program of having a trailer to help ranchers enables them to see what can be done for non-lethal loss prevention. He also stated that European countries are looking at what LLB has done and intend to duplicate this effort. Seth Wilson said this is a good program to help educate livestock owners on loss prevention methods. Elaine Allestad said this is a good use of limited resources that can be reused for multiple projects. Because this was already voted on it was an effort to help people to understand that the board did authorize these purchases.

New Business:

SB133 – This is legislation which would require anyone submitting a claim for a death loss payment must have paid their per-capita fees in the prior year in order to be eligible for a death loss payment.

Mr. Edwards explained to the board that this bill has already passed the senate and is now headed to the house for a hearing. He stated that concerns have been raised about tribal members submitting a claim because they are not subject to per-capita fees. He informed the board that there will be a proposed amendment to the bill exempting tribal members from the per-capita requirement. According to board records for calendar year 2018, one fourth of all people applying for death loss payments had not paid per-capita fees. He stated that revenue generated by the fees will not go into this board's accounts. The fees support the Department of Livestock. Seth Wilson said that this requirement may cause a negative feeling towards the board. Other board members made similar statements.

Public Comment on SB133 – Dave McEwen, past president of Montana Woolgrowers stated that Woolgrowers will be opposing this piece of legislation. He said it is a thumb in the face to tribes which have been sending money to USDA Wildlife Services for predator control. He went on to say this needs to be rectified before damage is done. This is not a revenue board and should not be collecting revenue for the Board of Livestock. It is not in this board's mission nor should it be.

Motion: Jim Cross made a motion for the board to not take a position or be an informational witness on this legislation. Seth Wilson seconded the motion.

Discussion: No further discussion was offered. **Vote:** Elaine Allestad, Jim Cross and Seth Wilson voted in favor of the motion. Doreen Gillespie abstained from the discussion and vote because her husband is the legislator carrying this bill. None opposed. Motion carried.

SJ6 & SJ7 – Seth Wilson asked Mr. Edwards had taken positions on policy legislation. Mr. Edwards stated the board has not done so in the past. He stated that there is a lot of pressure asking for the board to become involved from groups. Ms. Allestad recommended the board should stay out of this type of legislation and the board should not take a position or participate further. Ms. Allestad and Mr. Cross were members of the state wolf advisory council and at that time the board was created to help further the delisting of wolves. Mr. Wilson voiced his concern that taking a position could alienate supporters of the board. Currently both livestock and environmental organizations support the work of the board because of the balanced approach. Ms. Gillespie stated she did not view Senator Cuffe's SJ6 as not being a political effort but instead is for the benefit to help livestock producers with grizzly bear predation. Mike Honeycutt state there are four positions for a bill. They are proponent, opponent, informational and monitor.

Motion: Jim Cross made a motion for the board to take a monitor position on SJ6 and SJ7. Seth Wilson seconded the motion. **Discussion:** No further discussion was offered. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

LC2777 – This bill would add black bear caused loss to the board for compensation and loss prevention grants. Mr. Cross said this is similar to legislation from prior sessions on other predators. Mr. Cross and Ms. Allestad both stated the original purpose of this board was to help livestock owners with predation by endangered species. Mr. Cross said Fish, Wildlife and Parks already has the flexibility to deal with problems created by black bears. Mr. Edwards had checked with USDA Wildlife Services for information on black bear caused loss. He stated that about \$16,000 in death loss to cattle, sheep and goats was reported. He then went on to read a statement from an email sent by the State Director of Wildlife Services which stated "as we have experienced with lions, the calls & investigations would increase significantly if the LLB paid out on black bear damage.

Public Comment on LC2777 – Dave McEwen stated that Woolgrowers will be opposing this legislation. He added that it would place an additional burden on USDA Wildlife Services performing investigations. Wildlife Services already has the ability to catch and remove a depredating black bear. If they didn't catch the bear right away FWP would step in to take care of the problem, bear.

Motion: Seth Wilson made a motion to oppose LC2777 due to concerns about mission drift as well as limited funding. Jim Cross seconded the motion.

Discussion: No further discussion was offered. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

HB520 – This bill would increase the board’s current statutory appropriation from \$200,000 to \$300,000. Board members discussed the need for additional revenue in order to continue paying death loss claims. The addition of mountain lion caused loss during the 2017 legislature has placed a burden on available money for claims. Mr. Edwards stated more money is being paid out than is coming in for claims.

Public Comment on HB520 – Gary Burnett said his organization covers an area from the Madison to the Flathead. This is a significant source of funding that combined with private organizations helps those dealing with large predator conflicts. Ranchers and private organizations rely on this important function of the board.

Dave McEwen said this legislation is the result of efforts by Montana Woolgrowers Association to help deal with predation. He reminded board members that it was Woolgrowers that was able to obtain the original funding from the legislature.

Motion: Seth Wilson made a motion for the board to support HB520. Doreen Gillespie seconded the motion. **Discussion:** No further discussion was offered. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

LC3227 – This bill proposes to eliminate the Livestock Loss Board and place the programs operated by the board under the Board of Livestock. Mr. Cross said the reason the Livestock Loss Board was established was to create an autonomous board with a makeup that is different than the Board of Livestock. Mr. Wilson said what makes this board work is the diverse makeup of the board. This makeup crosses the political spectrum and support is needed from both sides of the issues. Our board is this balanced body and is best suited to continue with their programs. Ms. Allestad explained that the Wolf Advisory Council looked into placing the programs under either Fish, Wildlife & Parks or the Department of Livestock. She said neither of them wanted the programs and through the development process it was determined this board is the best result. Mike Honeycutt said this is a bill at the request of the governor and it includes the Milk Control Board as well. Ms. Gillespie asked Mr. Honeycutt how this topic originated. Mr. Honeycutt stated that other boards have been looked at in past legislative sessions.

Public Comment on LC3227 – Dave McEwen stated the Board of Livestock already has plenty to deal with within the Department of Livestock. This board represents all sides with the best results. Montana Woolgrowers will be opposing

this bill if it moves forward. Ranchers and private organizations rely on the important functions of the Livestock Loss Board and its independence from the Board of Livestock.

Motion: Doreen Gillespie made a motion to oppose LC3227. Jim Cross seconded the motion. **Discussion:** No further discussion was offered. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

HB291 – Mr. Honeycutt mentioned that the Livestock Loss Board's payments were brought up during a hearing on HB291. Mr. Edwards read the introductory language for HB291. This bill creates a special donation that individuals purchasing a FWP conservation license can donate for lethal wolf control by USDA Wildlife Services. During testimony in the House Agriculture Committee Mr. Honeycutt was asked questions about Livestock Loss Board payments. Testimony was related to indirect caused loss. Ms. Allestad said the board has always wanted to provide compensation for indirect loss, but adequate funding is not available.

Motion: Seth Wilson made a motion for board staff to provide testimony as an informational witness. Jim Cross seconded the motion. **Discussion:** No further discussion was offered. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

Public Comment: No additional public comment was offered.

Motion: Jim Cross made a motion to adjourn. Doreen Gillespie seconded the motion. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

DATED this 19th day of September, 2019



Seth Wilson, Chairman
Montana Livestock Loss Board