



Livestock Loss Board
October 14, 2011
Powell County Community Center
Deer Lodge MT

Meeting Minutes

Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board Members Present:

Elaine Allestad – Chairperson
Larry Trexler
Michael Leahy
James Cross
John Herman

Staff:

George Edwards – Livestock Loss Mitigation Coordinator

Guests:

Kraig Glazier – USDA, WS
Quentin Kujala - FWP
Keith Kubista - SFW
Suzy Foss – Ravalli County Commissioner
Jody Pauley - MSU Extension
Bob Harrison - NRDC
Louisa Willcox - NRDC
Seth Wilson - Blackfoot Challenge
Rae Herman
Keith Hansen
Bryce Andrews
Wayne Slaught
Melly Reuling - Keystone Conservation
Tim Bennett - Keystone Conservation

Call to Order and Administrative Items:

Chairperson Elaine Allestad called the meeting to order.

Introductions:

- Each board member and board staff introduced themselves.
- Chairperson Allestad asked the audience members to introduce themselves and encouraged public comment.

Board Minutes:

Board members reviewed the April 15, 2011 minutes. **Motion:** John Herman made a motion to approve the minutes. Larry Trexler seconded the motion. **Discussion:** None **Vote:** All in favor none opposed. Motion carried.

Budget Status:

Mr. Harris was unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Edwards stated that the last budget report he received from Mr. Harris shows we are at 27.9% of the budget year. The board is in good shape and has used 20% of the budget. The remaining budget is \$56,361 out of a total budget of \$70,798.

Board members reviewed the budget prepared by Mr. Harris. **Motion:** Larry Trexler made a motion to approve the budget report. John Herman seconded the motion. **Discussion:** None **Vote:** All in favor none opposed. Motion carried.

Reports:

- **George Edwards – LLB Board Administrator**

Mr. Edwards reviewed the board's current loss statistics. Livestock losses are now posted on the board's website www.llb.mt.gov and loss numbers are updated as claims come into the board's office. There is about \$173,000 dollars left in appropriated funds for payments. These are general fund dollars from HB622 that is restricted to death loss only. Mr. Edwards will be attending most of the agricultural group's annual meetings.

- **Kraig Glazier – USDA Wildlife Services**

This year depredations are down for calves. Last year 120 calves were killed. So far this year 64 calves have been killed. Adult cows are about the same as last year. Sheep numbers are about the same as last year. The downturn in losses lasted until this summer when loss numbers increase to the same as last year.

George Edwards asked if some producers are still paying for helicopter time after a predation and does USDA WS have any money for flying. Mr. Glazier said they do have some money for flying that was supplied by FWP since the second week of September. Larry Trexler asked how long the funding will last. Mr. Glazier said that depends on the amount of calls they receive for wolf work. Mr. Glazier stressed that USDA WS is responding to calls even though they have fewer staff and operating. Earlier this summer they were cut back to a four day work week but they are now back to a normal schedule.

- **Quentin Kujala – FWP**

Mr. Kujala spoke about FWP's website on the wolf hunting season. Current take is listed by each specific region. Their staff is working on ways to verify that a wolf was taken and not just called in to fill a quota. Season setting should occur next summer but the commission could decide to set the season in December. The commission may have a placeholder for their November meeting to address the current hunting season if the numbers are considered low. Monitoring continues to evolve. Wolf specialist duties will continue to be refined. The weekly wolf report is also continuing to be refined as well.

Mr. Kujala cautioned the board on joint meetings with FWP's commission. He went on to say what do you want the conversation to be? He suggested the board the board should define what their role would be, how does the board define it and where would it be held. Keith Kubista suggested including county commissioners in joint meetings or at least notify them. Mr. Kujala suggested a collaborative meeting with the board and commission to define a discussion that could identify points that could be answered by each entity. Suzy Foss said it needs to go beyond livestock or FWP issues and needs to include hunting groups with everyone working together.

Old Business:

- **Prevention Grants**

George Edwards placed this on the agenda in case the board wished to discuss the prevention grants issued earlier in the year. John Herman said it was a good use of the money and helps gain knowledge.

New Business:

- **Ed Jonas III Loss Claim**

Elaine Allestad announced Mr. Jonas would like his claim to be tabled at this time. Mr. Jonas was not present at this meeting. Pictures of the dead were viewed by all of the board members present. Mrs. Allestad asked Mr. Glazier to give a brief explanation of his review of this case. Mr. Glazier was contacted by Mr. Jonas and asked to review USDA WS Specialist, Ted North's investigation. Mr. Glazier had reviewed the same pictures shown to the board and agreed with Mr. North's assessment that wolves had not killed the cow. Mr. Jonas then appealed Mr. North's determination to Mr. Glazier's supervisor John Steuber who also agreed with Mr. North's determination. Mr. Jonas then appealed Mr.

Steuber's assessment to his supervisor in Colorado. All USDA WS personnel agreed with Mr. North's investigation report. George Edwards added that Mr. Jonas called him and asked for a legal opinion on the constitutionality of 2-15-3112, MCA which states the board cannot overturn a determination made by USDA WS personnel.

- **Actions from Listening Session**

The board acknowledged the value of the listening session and appreciated those who attended. No actions were taken at this time from the listening session.

- **Loss Prevention - Timm Kaminski**

Timm Kaminiski has been involved with wolf restoration effort for over 30 years. He is a recovery team biologist and project leader. Well intended efforts did not turn out to be good practice on the ground. With that background he has spent the last 17 years working specifically on the ground. Wolves in Alberta have been hunted for a long time. People there can shoot wolves as they see fit if they are within an eight kilometer area around a ranch.

Wolves are opportunists and they will take advantage of vulnerability. Part of where they have been successful up north is in taking expertise of his colleges and himself by merging what they know about predator prey interactions, especially if they involve elk, moose and deer. They use a year round approach for prevention. They concern themselves with behavior, both carnivore and livestock. A mix of those creates problems. Problems are missing cattle, extra work, open cows, incomplete pasture use all amount to money. Depredations are cyclic and probably always will be. Many of the problems are not addressed in a compensation framework. Killing all wolves is not the answer but going to non-lethal isn't either. Part of the success is merging both issues. Grazing strategies is a tool to reduce the risk. Interactions in the spring are tough. Feeding in the morning causes cattle to spread out in the early afternoon. Cattle are pretty well distributed around the pasture. This is a problem. They changed the feeding time to the afternoon; it changed the distribution and dispersion of the cattle. Wolves and bears will hunt at night, typically from 10:00 pm to 4:00 am. Feeding in the morning means more livestock are dispersed and vulnerable to predation during the time when predators are most active. Feeding late in the day means livestock will bed down near each other in more concentrated groups. Deer and elk come out in the late evening and predators will target the animals outside of groups.

Michael Leahy asked if there are cattle that are more defensible, more adaptable to wolves and bears. Mr. Kaminski said any cow being chased around by wolves will get on the fight pretty quick. In Alberta they changed their calving time to

April-May instead of February. As the calf gets older it gets more independent. Late calving means the calves are closer to their mothers during peak predation times of July and August. An older calf acts more like a yearling. That two month difference makes a big difference when the calves are more independent. Wolves will find older calves at greater distances away from the cows and easier to prey on them.

Elaine Allestad asked how the ungulate population is fairing in Alberta. Mr. Kaminski responded wolves move elk, moose and deer around. There are some places where elk are declining but that could be unhealthy animals. Animals move under pressure and may not be in places they used to be. Alberta is different in that wolves can be shot at year round. Intensive monitoring of livestock helps to keep wolves from attacking livestock as wolves begin to avoid a human presence.

Mr. Kaminski suggested putting out some sweetener for cattle in the evenings to help bunch and settle them. On public lands where ranchers are supposed to distribute cattle widely, salt your uplands, keep them out of the bottoms are all designed to manage grass. Those same practices exacerbate the problem by increasing livestock vulnerability. Hopefully changes can be incorporated into the Farm Bill to help relieve the expense on ranchers. Seth Wilson spoke about Blackfoot Challenge's carcass removal program to help remove attractants that bring in predators. Mr. Kaminski said paying attention to behaviors is very important. Animals learn by experience and will look for food sources. If a dead carcass is found they move the cattle away from that area for about three days. In the summer time they don't pick up carcasses.

Mike Leahy posed a question to the board; what do we want our role in prevention to be and expanding prevention? Mr. Leahy suggested the prevention subcommittee get together in the upcoming months and come up with some recommendations to the board as for what or if any role we want to play. We could play a convening role we could have a session on prevention.

Motion: Mike Leahy made a motion to have the prevention subcommittee make recommendations to the board as far as coordinating and sharing information on livestock losses and investigating alternative sources of funding. John Herman seconded the motion. **Discussion:** None. **Vote:** All in favor none opposed. Motion carried.

- **FWP Response to Board's Letters**

Elaine Allestad respectfully disagreed with Mr. Maurier's answers to the board's questions, specifically on the wolf hides but mostly with the Pittman-Robertson dollars. Mrs. Allestad said she would entertain a motion for a discussion on writing a letter to our senate and house Fish, Wildlife and Parks committees to ask them to if they would write a letter asking the same question to Federal officials. Other states spend money on prevention and reimbursement and don't

seem to have a problem with the federal government. Mike Leahy said the only way we will probably get a clear answer is to ask US Fish & Wildlife Service directly or maybe from the Congressional Research Service. Either Senator Tester or Baucus could make this request for an official opinion. Mrs. Allestad suggested the board needs to seek someone other than the director of FWP for an answer. We are not asking to spend license dollars but we would be asking to spend money given back to the state from excise taxes on sporting goods. LLB is a component of Montana's Wolf Management Plan written by FWP.

- **Fundraising**

George Edwards said the license plates will become available in January and asked the board to tell him how the funds will be used. Mike Leahy said the range of options would be compensation, prevention, a combination of the two or to dump it into trust fund. Elaine Allestad said as a fundraiser it would be better received if the funds were used on the ground. John Herman said he would like to see the money used for prevention. Mike Leahy is supportive of that.

Motion: John Herman made a motion to apply the license plate and wolf hide funds to prevention. Mike Leahy seconded the motion. **Discussion:** None. **Vote:** All in favor none opposed. Motion carried.

- **Board Meeting Dates**

Members of the prevention committee will attempt to meet December 6th in Butte. Committee members are Elaine Allestad, John Herman and Mike Leahy.

Board members selected May 18 as a first choice or May 11th as a second choice for a listening session and board meeting. The May meetings will be held in Hamilton, Montana.

Public Comment

- Public comment occurred throughout the board meeting.

Adjournment 5:20 pm

DATED this 18 day of May, 2012

Elaine K. Allestad

Elaine K. Allestad, Chair
Montana Livestock Loss Board