



**MONTANA
WOOL
GROWERS
ASSOCIATION**

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RECEIVED

Montana Environmental Quality Council
State Capitol Building
Helena, Montana 59620

SEP 13 2005

September 9, 2005
LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL
POLICY OFFICE

Dear Council Members:

As the wolf population grows in Montana my members are having more problems with wolf depredation. More to the point, a reluctance on the part of the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks departments wolf co-ordination employees in stopping the killing that occurs. There seems to be no connection between FWP and the monetary loss to my members when sheep are killed by predators. My members are not raising sheep to have them eaten and/or torn apart by predatory wildlife. If action isn't taken to stop predation when it occurs it continues.

The latest incident occurred on the Helle operation near Dillon. Wolves have killed guarding dogs, wounded seriously guarding dogs and have killed sheep. The Helles reported the predation to Wildlife Services which is a part of USDA, and charged with protecting livestock from predatory animals including wolves. WS contacted Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks only to be told that any control activity could only be done within a one-mile limit of the band of sheep where predation occurred. There are six bands of sheep in this area. Why should all six bands of sheep be subject to wolf kills? Wildlife Service trappers have their hands tied by the state wildlife agency and the livestock owner is not given satisfactory attention or concern.

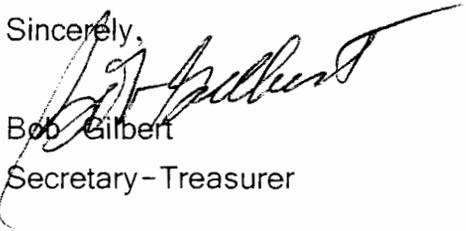
We ask that the EQC look into this matter and recognize that the expertise in controlling predation lies with Wildlife Services of USDA. The state of Montana does not need to start another animal damage control agency, we

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already have an excellent number of trappers under Wildlife Services. EQC needs to contact the owner of the sheep recently attacked, Mr. John Helle at 406 683 6686, Joe Helle at 406 683 2804, the director of the Wildlife Services in Billings, Larry Handegard at 406 657 6464, and naturally contact the wolf co-ordinator for MFWP, Carolyn Sime in Helena.

Montana is down to the lowest numbers of breeding sheep in this state's history. While not entirely to blame for the loss of production, wolf predation left unattended certainly drives people from raising sheep. I can name you one person who quit because of the wolf activity and that is Vern Keller of Fishtail, Montana who just gave up after problems with wolves, grizzly bears, mountain lions and coyotes became to much. The Helle operation is by far the largest in the state and this association does not want to see them driven from raising sheep because of someone's preference of wolves over domestic livestock.

Sincerely,



Bob Gilbert

Secretary-Treasurer

cc: Jeff Hagener, Director FWP

Larry Handegard, Director Wildlife Services