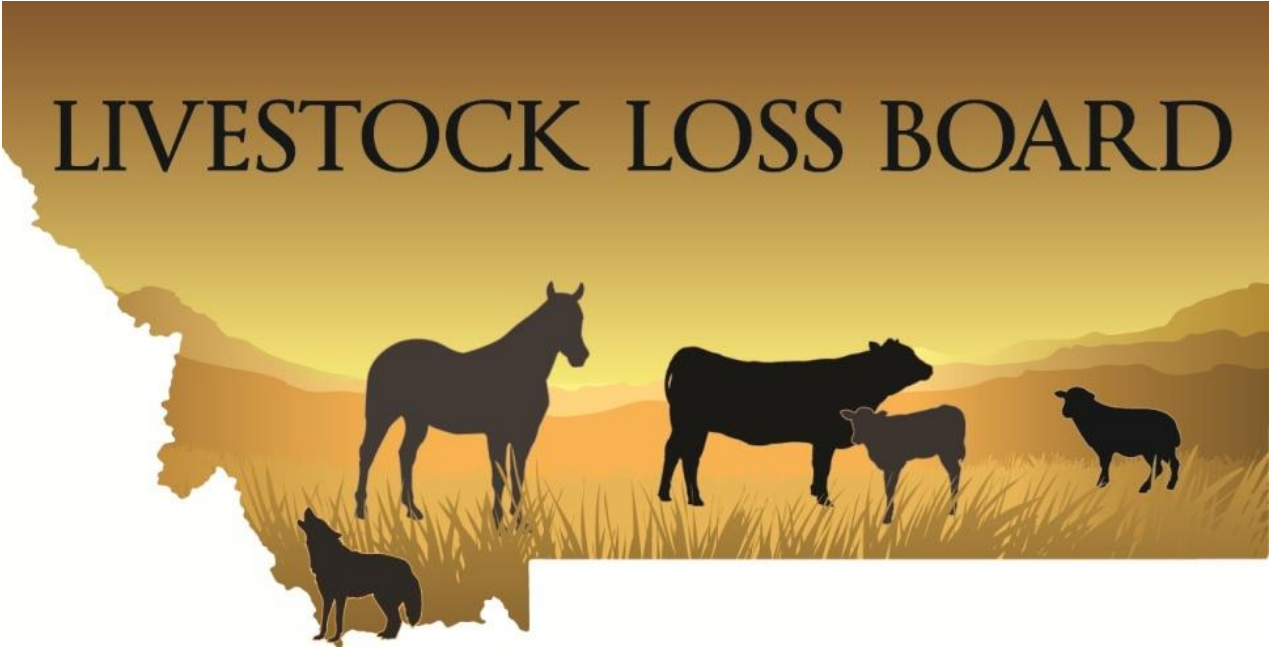


# LIVESTOCK LOSS BOARD

## 2020 Biennial Report



A report to  
Legislative Economic Affairs Interim Committee

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# Livestock Loss Board

[www.llb.mt.gov](http://www.llb.mt.gov)

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## **Overview**

The Livestock Loss Board is a component of Montana's Wolf, Grizzly Bear and Mountain Lion Conservation and Management Plans. This board is responsible for two elements of the plan, livestock loss prevention and livestock loss compensation.

During the 2013 legislature grizzly bear caused losses were added to the board's programs via HB 323. Defenders of Wildlife had been paying for livestock losses due to grizzly bears until October 1, 2013. This organization had also been paying for wolf caused losses until April 15, 2008. During the 2017 legislative session HB 286 was passed adding mountain lion caused loss to our board. Additional funding was added to cover the additions of grizzly bear and mountain lion caused losses. The board receives \$300,000 per year via a statutory appropriation and is restricted to death loss only payments.

Board programs are overseen by the Livestock Loss Board (LLB). LLB is a five-member board appointed by the governor. LLB is administratively attached to the Department of Livestock. Currently three board members must be actively involved in the livestock industry and have knowledge and experience regarding wildlife impacts or management. Two board members are selected from the general public who are or have been actively involved in wildlife conservation or wildlife management and who have knowledge and experience regarding livestock production or management.

## **LLB Mission Statement**

To help support Montana livestock communities by reducing the economic impacts of wolves and grizzly bears on individual producers by reimbursing their confirmed and probable wolf or grizzly bear caused losses and helping to reduce their losses by approving projects and funding programs that will discourage wolves, grizzly bears or mountain lions from killing livestock.

## **Board Meetings**

LLB has held a minimum of two full board meetings each fiscal year. When loss prevention funding is available more board meetings are held for grant application review. Board members used to hold a listening session prior to each meeting with livestock owners and other interested parties. The purpose of the listening sessions is to for members of the public to become acquainted with the board and for board members to listen to their concerns. Information from the listening sessions has helped board members with future decisions and as a basis for the best use of available funds. Due to budget shortfalls, the board no longer holds meetings around the state. Because of this, listening sessions have ceased to occur. Board members are eager to start them again when possible. All meeting agendas are posted on the board's website [www.llb.mt.gov](http://www.llb.mt.gov) prior to each meeting.

LLB continually seeks fundraising opportunities. Board members and their staff person attend as many meetings as possible to inform organizations about the need for additional funding. This includes the ever-increasing death loss payments as well as loss prevention efforts. Many

of these groups identified state funding as the next best option. The thought behind this is that individuals who want greater numbers of wolves, grizzly bears and mountain lions within the state should help fund the losses caused by these predators.

### **Tribal Agreements**

2-15-3113 (2), MCA, states The Livestock Loss Board may enter into an agreement with any Montana tribe, if the tribe has adopted a wolf or grizzly bear or mountain lion management plan for reservation lands that is consistent with the state management plans, to provide that tribal lands within reservation boundaries are eligible for mitigation grants pursuant to [2-15-3111](#) and that livestock losses on tribal lands within reservation boundaries are eligible for reimbursement payments pursuant to [2-15-3112](#).

### **Program Funding**

2-15-3114, MCA. Funding of programs -- contingency. The awarding of grants and reimbursements and the performance of duties pursuant to [2-15-3111](#) through [2-15-3113](#) are contingent upon the amount of money available in the accounts provided for in [81-1-110](#) through [81-1-113](#).

The board began accepting loss applications on April 15, 2008. Loss payments were made until the beginning of December 2008 when the board ran out of funds. Available funds for this time frame were the \$30,000 provided by a legislative appropriation and a \$50,000 donation from Defenders of Wildlife. Livestock owners were given a letter stating future loss payments would be made when additional funding was secured. Small donations started to come in and payments were continued as the donations were received. In the spring of 2009, Defenders of Wildlife provided an additional \$50,000 donation which allowed LLB to become current with livestock loss payments. Legislators provided a biennial \$150,000 appropriation for fiscal years 2010 and 2011. This fund was depleted by the end of the 2010 fiscal year. Federal funds became available about the same time that state funds were depleted. The federal funds allowed the board to stay current on death loss payments during fiscal year 2011.

HB 622 was passed by the 2011 legislature. This bill provided the board with a statutory appropriation of \$200,000 per year. SB 73 was passed by the 2017 legislature and renewed the statutory appropriation until 2023. Beginning in 2017, payments began exceeding the appropriation. During the 2019 legislative session, HB520 increased the statutory appropriation to \$300,000 each year. Funds are restricted to pay producers for confirmed and probable livestock death losses. These funds have allowed the board to stay current on all death loss payments. Unspent funds from the statutory appropriation rollover into a loss prevention account. In the past the board used rollover money to pay claims as the number of claims began to exceed the \$200,000 statutory appropriation. In calendar year 2018 the board paid out \$230,412 and \$260,838 in calendar year 2019. All claims are verified by USDA Wildlife Service personnel as they have the sole discretion per 2-15-3112(5), MCA.

Additionally, \$115,000 in federal grant funds was available for wolf caused livestock death losses from calendar year 2020. \$35,000 from federal funding was used first for death loss claims in order to offset using state general funds. \$80,000 was used for wolf caused loss prevention projects.

Legislation from the 2015 session, HB 145 capped rollover funds from the statutory appropriation at \$300,000. During FY2021 \$55,410 was rolled over into the loss prevention funding which was used to help fund grizzly bear loss prevention projects. With the rise in losses due to grizzly bears, rollover funding is not a certainty. This means the board doesn't know if they will have loss prevention funding each year.

Funding for loss prevention has been sporadic for grizzly bear projects. The board has successfully applied for and received many one-time-only federal grants for death loss payments and loss prevention projects due to wolves. Federal grants were received in 2011, 2013, 2015 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. Federal funding has been restricted to wolf caused losses and loss prevention projects.. Additionally, each grantee had to provide an equal amount of matching funds for their projects. No federal funding has been available for death loss or loss prevention projects due to grizzly bears or mountain lions.

LLB has a specialty license plate that became available in February 2012. Revenue from license plate sales has been approximately \$4,000 per year. Board members have reserved this fund for unforeseen needs as they occur.

## **Payments**

Animals eligible for coverage for losses by wolves, grizzly bears and mountain lions are cattle, swine, horses, mules, sheep, goats, llamas, and livestock guard animals on state, federal, and private land and on tribal land that is eligible through a formal agreement. Payments are provided to livestock owners when livestock losses are verified by USDA Wildlife Services personnel as being confirmed or probable due to wolf, grizzly bear or mountain lion caused livestock loss. USDA Wildlife Services personnel are experts in performing investigations and necropsies to determine the type of predator causing livestock losses. Payments are not provided for livestock losses due to any other predators. A new law went into effect on July 1, 2020 requiring livestock owner to be current on their annual per-capita fees. In the first half of 2019 only half of the livestock owners had paid the fee. Now livestock owners who have not paid the fee are notified they must become current in order to receive a payment. A common misperception is that per-capita fees fund this board. LLB is funded by general fund dollars.

## **Animal Values**

Cattle, sheep and goat values are determined by using a Montana Weekly Auction Summary report compiled by USDA Market News, Billings, MT. Registered animal values are calculated by using sales receipts for registered animals of a similar age and sex. Horse values have been determined using Billings Livestock Commission horse sales averages. Board members review

swine sales in Montana to determine their values. LLB reviewed an American Sheep Industry study on guard dogs to help determine livestock guard dog values. Pets and hunting dogs are not covered under LLB's compensation program.

### **Reported Livestock Loss Numbers**

Livestock loss numbers reported by LLB are only for claims submitted by livestock owners which have been verified by USDA Wildlife Service. Although most livestock owners submit a loss claim for livestock killed by wolves, grizzly bears and mountain lions. There are a few that do not. LLB reported loss numbers are for losses listed as confirmed or probable by USDA Wildlife Services. Total payment dollars per year vary due to the type of livestock lost and variable market prices.

In order to provide the public current loss claim activity, LLB posts the type of animal and the county where it was killed on a Facebook page "Livestock Loss Board". This page can be accessed from the board's website [www.llb.mt.gov](http://www.llb.mt.gov). Additionally, a report "Livestock Loss Statistics" is available for each calendar year on the board's website. Each year contains losses by county, animal type and total dollar amounts paid in each county. Current year losses and Facebook postings are updated as the claims are received.

Losses by calendar year:

2008 – 238 head, \$87,318  
2009 – 370 head, \$144,996  
2010 – 175 head, \$99,554  
2011 – 95 head, \$85,855  
2012 – 125 head, \$102,714  
2013 – 102 head, \$95,964  
2014 – 89 head, \$127,420  
2015 – 200 head, \$199,912  
2016 – 211 head, \$167,972  
2017 – 218 head, \$208,719  
2018 – 294 head, \$230,412  
2019 – 373 head, \$260,838