

**ALBERTA BEEF PRODUCERS
MINUTES FOR THE WILDLIFE COMMITTEE MEETING
FRIDAY NOVEMBER 13, 2015, 9:00 a.m.
AT NORTHLANDS MEETING ROOM, EDMONTON, AB**

Present: Colin Campbell - *Chair, Board Rep*
John Buckley - *Zone 3*
Cecil Anderson - *Zone 6*
Rick McKnight - *Zone 7*
Gordon Graves - *Zone 8*
Norm Hennigar - *Zone 9*

Staff: Fred Hays - *Policy Analyst*

Guests: Travis Ripley - *Fish & Wildlife Policy*
Miles Grove - *Fish & Wildlife Justice*
Mike Ewald - *Fish & Wildlife Justice*
Soren Odgaard - *AAMDC*

Absent: Brad Osadczuk - *Zone 1*

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

1. Adoption of Agenda **9:00 a.m.**

(a) Adoption of agenda:

Motion by Graves/Buckley:

“That the agenda be approved.”

Carried

2. Minutes of Previous Meetings

(a) Minutes of July 22, 2015 meeting:

Motion by McKnight/Buckley:

“That the minutes of the July 22, 2015 Wildlife Committee meeting be approved.”

Carried

(b) Matters arising from minutes:

3. Financial Statement

(a) Financial Statement ending October 31, 2015:

There has been very little activity with the budget

Motion by Graves/Anderson:

“That the financial statement be accepted for information purposes only.”

Carried

4. Decision Items

(a) Issues with Wildlife Policy

Travis Ripley from Alberta Environment and Parks, Fish and Wildlife Policy, discussed the number of wildlife claims during the past year. They are expecting to have to compensate about \$450,000 for 2015. The claim process

was discussed. The province does have increased pressures on their budgets for all expenditures including wildlife damages. The GOA will be reviewing their budgets this month; and an independent audit is also to occur. The *Alberta Game Management Advisory Group* (AGMAG) will be changed to better reflect the industry and government needs. A new committee, the *Alberta Game Policy Advisory Committee* (AGPAC) will have extended membership with participation designates being minister appointees for a two year period. It will be chaired by FW. They will also be reviewing the Wildlife Predator and Shot Livestock Committee structure. ACA pay deadstock compensation mainly from hunting and fishing license revenue of about \$12 million per year. These are published in the ACA Annual Report. This was a contract with the GOA under an MOU presently under review. It will open again in May, 2016. There was some discussion about the past ACA revenues and expenses dealing with wildlife compensation. There was also some discussion about the accuracy of determining wildlife numbers through surveys, and basing the hunting tags on these. There was discussion about coyotes not being classified as predators; according to the Miistakis report coyotes cause 50 percent of the financial wildlife losses to producers. AAMDC indicated that the Agriculture Service Board fieldmen are responsible for dealing with local coyote problems. There was also a suggestion that managing wildlife with the WMU system is not working well. Some allowance needs to occur with multi-WMU problems.

(b) Wildlife Impact Strategy

The wildlife strategy direction was discussed from the last WC meeting in July. Since then McKnight and Hays met with the AAMDC board in October to discuss possible collaboration. ABP needs to work through the AGPAC process as a start to solve wildlife issues. Possible changes in Wildlife Regulations can also start here.

It was recommended that a one page document for producers dealing with wildlife issues be developed. This would include how to report a kill, how to present evidence to FW, how to protect evidence against scavengers, and keeping neighbours informed.

Motion by McKnight/Graves:

“That the Wildlife Committee develop a one pager to help producers report and preserve predation losses.”

Carried

A common focus for producers and those involved with wildlife such as hunters, the Fish and Game Association, Fish and Wildlife policy, dealing with predators, tag

allocations, hunter access and wildlife population control needs to be addressed. It was recommended that a small forum be initiated, possibly in Edmonton in mid January 2016, between the stakeholders to start the conversation. Stakeholders could include ABP, Alberta Fish and Game Association, Alberta Agriculture Service Board (ASB), Alberta Fish and Game (Policy) and a few others. It was suggested having three representatives from each (two members plus their resource member) plus an independent facilitator from Alberta Culture lead the discussion.

Motion by Groves/Henninger:

“That a multi-sector forum be developed for mid-January 2016 to explore establishing a common ground for wildlife management.”

Carried

Discussion with the FW Operations indicated their booklet “Rancher’s Guide to Predator Attacks on Livestock” had been successful, but would probably not be printed again because of cost. ABP communications to producers could be developed to include a one pager item and FW phone numbers in the booklet, using the ABP logo and support financing of another printing. FW will provide a memo to clarify the Predator claim process and the 24 hour emergency number. These actions would need to be approved by the board before any follow through.

Motion by McKnight/Buckley:

“That Fish and Wildlife be approached to recommend ABP participation in a printing of a modified Rancher’s Guide”

Carried

The best communication methods for ABP continue to be GrassRoutes-weekly newsletter, GrassRoutes report and the radio report “Cattle Country”, although with limited coverage in the province. Hays will provide news coverage for the next Cattle Country and GrassRoutes reports.

More communication between AAMDC and ABP needs to occur dealing with wildlife issues. ASB field staff are usually the first to deal with farm problems in the counties. Office staff (possibly Tasha Blumenthal) can be used to help research background information for resolutions. Odegard will discuss this collaboration at the next AAMDC meeting. Recommending that someone from the Agricultural Service Board Provincial (ASB) should be recommended for AGPAC membership. Hays will contact Pat Gordeyko, Chair Provincial ASB, and FW Policy about this.

Campbell would present this report to the board at their next meeting.

(c) AGPAC Meeting Day (formerly AGMAG)

This usually is on the first Thursday in December that normally conflicts with the ABP AGM. This year the

AGM starts on the first Monday of December, or the second week of the month without a conflict. Travis Ripley, FW Policy, will review this for subsequent years.

(d) Fish & Wildlife Evaluations:

(i) FW Officer Predation Evaluations Monitoring

A discussion with FW Operations, Justice and Solicitor General, reviewed the training process for FW Officers. Some producers felt there was a difference between FW Officers’ assessment of predation compensation claims. The GOA has four wildlife regions in Alberta, each with its own superintendent. They respond to a chief superintendent. Field officer recruitment and training is done in one area. The training program lasts 17 weeks; officers become familiar with legislation, predation investigations and looking at problem areas. Compensation and livestock investigation is covered under the Alberta Wildlife Regulations Section 13 to 16. Predation compensation is outlined in the department’s “Predation Response ID Guide”, and the “Wildlife Predator Compensation Claim” form. Suspect predation injury or kills should be reported to the local FW office. Supporting evidence needs to be available for a full claim. If sufficient evidence for cause is not readily available, probable cause may be established if there is confirmed evidence of a wildlife kill or injury within 10 km from the location. Probable kills are paid at 50 percent of total value. Producers are encouraged to gather evidence themselves by taking pictures after the injury or kill to support their claim. Neighbourhood wildlife problems can be assessed by the FW officer. Shot livestock claims should be reported to the local RCMP. They will investigate these problems. If a producer is not satisfied with the final assessment an appeal can be made through the “Wildlife Shot Compensation Group”, if there is additional evidence or information. ABP has a member on this Group. The compensation process is outlined by the ABP flowchart “*AFSC, Fish and Wildlife, and ACA Wildlife Damage Compensation 2015, Plan, Strategy and Compensation*” available on the ABP website.

(ii) FW Audit System

The Wildlife Compensation system is reviewed periodically by FW management. A change to the process was made during 2015 to improve administrative flow and speed up compensation payments.

(iii) FW Officer Evaluation Audits

All compensation claims in the province are monitored and reviewed by one of four FW Regional Problem Wildlife Specialists (one for each zone). Any offside investigation assessment can be flagged at this point; reassessment by the field officer can be requested and reviewed, and modified if required, at this point.

(iv) FW Officer Numbers

There was some concern that there was a shortage of FW officers to properly manage field situations. This had been introduced as an ASB resolution this year as well. The Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Branch was moved to Justice and Solicitor General in 2011. Since then the number of FW officers has remained the same at 144 positions; 30 new officers have been hired to fill vacancies. Another competition is currently underway to fill the remaining vacancies.

5. In Camera

6. Discussion Items

(a) AFSC-FW-ACA Relationship Flowchart update:

This flowchart reviews the relationship between wildlife claims and compensation involved with crop loss, livestock loss and damage prevention/mitigation involving AFSC, the FW Enforcement Branch, Alberta Conservation Association (ACA), the RCMP and the municipalities. Some parts of the chain need to be modified after FW consultation.

7. General Reading Material

- (a) Wildlife Predator Compensation Claim form, GOA
- (b) Evaluation of Suspected Predator Kills, GOA
- (c) Wildlife Regulations, Section 13 to 16
- (d) Rancher's Guide to Predator Attacks on Livestock, GOA
- (e) AFSC, Fish and Wildlife, and ACA Wildlife Damage Compensation 2015, Plan, Strategy and Compensation

8. Next Meeting and Upcoming Events

- (a) Forum planned for January 2016

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Graves at 2:45 p.m.