



ALBERTA LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO THE WILDLIFE ACT AND REGULATIONS

Background:

Alberta's ranchers and farmers who raise cattle and other livestock depend on a healthy natural environment to run sustainable operations. They also recognize that proper stewardship of the soil, water, air and biodiversity of Alberta is essential if producers are going to retain public support for raising livestock. Livestock owners place great value on environmental stewardship which ensures healthy rangelands and riparian areas for both domestic livestock and wildlife. Ranchers also recognize that healthy wildlife populations are not only an indicator of rangeland health, but also provide well-being and enjoyment to both landowners and the rest of society.

Although livestock producers, government, and society have a shared interest in conservation and preservation of wildlife populations, increasing trends in livestock predation have created several issues that need to be addressed, which will be enabled by improvements to the current legislation. The two main issues that need to be addressed are that current predator compensation levels do not account for all financial losses and too many suspected predator kills on livestock are not being assessed in a timely manner.

The Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association (WBRA) and its Carnivore Working Group have noted community frustration with the impact of large carnivores on farmers and ranchers in terms of both economic loss and rancher morale. Dissatisfaction with the Alberta Wildlife Predator Compensation Program throughout the province has been repeatedly identified as needing to be addressed in large part because it doesn't account for financial losses in addition to loss of the livestock itself. Two reports were produced to aid in resolving these concerns. The reports under the title "Carnivores and Conflict: A Community Approach to Carnivore Compensation" *Report 1: Summary of Carnivore Compensation Programs; Report 2: Proposed Amendments to Alberta Wildlife Predator Compensation Program* (Morrison, 2013), form the basis of the proposed changes to the Wildlife Act and Regulations highlighted below.

Along with the WBRA, our livestock organizations (ABP, AGLA, WSGA, and Alberta Lamb Producers) believe these changes will allow for better wildlife outcomes and tolerance for livestock owners to co-exist with wildlife on their land.



RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO THE WILDLIFE ACT:

Part 1, Section 2 (1) *The Minister may appoint wildlife guardians.*

- We recommend adding an additional section to allow for the appointment of “wildlife depredation inspectors or verifiers” with the specific authority to confirm predator kills on livestock or other farm animals and submit compensation claims on behalf of the livestock owner.
- We also recommend that Fish and Wildlife Officers would have the power to also appoint, train and/or certify “Wildlife depredation verifiers” in addition to the Minister.
- In addition, we recommend there are provisions for the above persons to be compensated for time and expenses spent on verifying livestock depredation by predators as has been modelled in BC.

Part 1, Section 4: *Rewards and remuneration*

- Add a third point to read:
Section 4(3): *The Minister may provide or allow for remuneration to persons with privately owned land for the maintenance and/or improvement of wildlife habitat as an ecological service, but does not contravene Section 49: Disposition of access to land*
- The intent of this recommendation is to create a mechanism that would give landowners an incentive to maintain or create wildlife habitat but is not intended for paid access.

RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO THE WILDLIFE REGULATION:

Section 11(b) *Definition of “livestock”:*

- Remove the phrase “*for the purposes only of interpreting those sections in respect of shot livestock compensation, domestic horse (Equus caballus)*” and replace with “*and other farm expensed animals, including domestic horse, stock dogs and guard animals*”
- Intent here is to allow compensation for animals that contribute to the farm business/livelihood, but not for pets and hobby animals. Several caveats could be added to this such as a maximum payment on specific classes of livestock.
- Additionally, we believe claims on horse injuries or death should be for both shot livestock and predation.



Section 13 *Shot Livestock Compensation*

- We recognize why claims on shot livestock are restricted to hunting seasons to reduce any moral hazard, however there have been some incidents outside of hunting season where there should be allowances for an investigation and opportunity for compensation in these exceptional circumstances.
- Currently the Wildlife Regulations state that livestock shot in a WMU during hunting season are to be reported to RCMP within three days and the RCMP will apply to the Minister for compensation (Section 13). In practice, this requirement does not result in compensation application files that are dealt with quickly and efficiently. In most cases, the RCMP detachment is dealing with more serious criminal offenses and cannot take the time away from those to attend to a shot livestock call. In many cases, the RCMP officer does not have the background or knowledge to recognize the requirements for investigation and photographic evidence needed to collect on compensation. The overall result is an inefficient use of resources and compensation being withheld unjustly.
- We propose the most effectual and economical way to handle shot livestock during hunting season would be to have the death or injury investigated by an Alberta Fish and Wildlife officer, a veterinarian or other trained verifier. The investigator would then submit the application for compensation to the Minister and also submit a report to the RCMP. The RCMP may investigate to determine the perpetrator and / or keep file of these incidents should there begin to be a pattern and an indication of something more criminal occurring.
- **Sec 13(2):** Make changes to whom the claimant is reporting shot livestock to and remove clause (c). Amend this section to read: *“The claimant must, (a) within 3 days of learning of the death or injury, report it to the nearest Fish and Wildlife office, (b) apply to the Minister for the compensation on a form provided by the Minister.”*
- **Sec 13(4):** Amend this section to also reflect the changes in reporting to read: *“The Fish and Wildlife officer or trained verifier to whom a death or injury is reported under subsection (2)(a) (a) may hire a veterinarian to examine the dead or injured animal, and (b) shall forward a copy of the report of its investigation and a claim for compensation by the veterinarian hired under clause (a), if any, to the Minister and (c) provide a copy of that report to the nearest detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.”*

Section 14: *Wildlife Predator Compensation:*

- **Sec 14(1):** Include *“ravens, coyotes, and foxes”* to *“wolves, grizzly bears, black bears, cougars, eagles”*
 - Ravens continue to provide challenges to producers that results in injuries and compensation for these is allowed in other jurisdictions. Foxes and coyotes are a significant predator on new lambs and calves and are also eligible predators in other provinces.
 - In our recommendation for Sec15(5)(b), compensation for injury due to coyotes, ravens, and foxes on cattle would remain at the current 100% of the value of the animal for



confirmed and 50% for probable because there are likely not other financial losses associated with depredation from these species.

- **Sec 14(2):** Include a phrase that reads “*unless the animal needs to be euthanized in which case a person can make a claim as if it was a confirmed kill*” after “*..the injured animal*”
- **Sec 14(4):** Remove subheadings (4)(a) and (4)(b).
 - These are two red tape regulations that we believe have created more cost and conflict than benefit to the program.
 - The specific guidelines around assessing a “probable” kill could be determined by the compensation committee.
- **Sec 14(5):** Amend the section to read “*...may be conducted by an appointed officer, a veterinarian, a problem wildlife specialist, wildlife guardian, or approved verification/wildlife depredation inspector.*”
 - This change allows for the new appointed verifiers/wildlife depredation inspectors the ability/authority to inspect and assess depredation.

Section 15: Compensation Committee

- **Sec 15(4):** Amend the statement to read: “*The compensation committee shall determine the value of a livestock animal based on the commercial market value of the class of livestock to which it belongs along with a multiplier to the market value to lower the burden of proof when assessing depredation.*”
 - This amendment is to allow for the compensation committee to determine an appropriate multiplier to the value of the animal affected by depredation
 - It is important to recognize that the market value of some classes of animals will be higher than the auction market meat price. This would include breeding females, bulls, purebred seedstock, trained horses, trained stock dogs, and trained guard animals. While this may be the case, the determination of these values should still be able to occur under the amended Sec 15(4) above.
- **Sec 15(5)(a):** Remove the phrase: “*...to a maximum, in the case of a horse, of \$2000,*”
 - The compensation committee can determine the appropriate maximum value for horses or other animals covered in the amended Sec 11(b)
- **Sec 15(5)(b):** Amend the statement to read: “*for wildlife predator compensation for dead livestock, 250% of the value of the animal for a confirmed death and 100% of the value of an animal whose death has been determined to be the probable result of predation with the exception of predation by ravens and coyotes which would only be covered for 100% of the value of the dead or injured livestock*”
 - We recommend including a multiplier of 2.5x the market value of an animal to account for other losses due to predation and to lower the burden of proof for these other losses.
 - Because ravens, coyotes, and foxes are common, they likely do not cause increased losses on the rest of the livestock herd (ie stress, loss of gain, etc) or infrastructure.



- **Sec 15(6):** Wording for this regulation is unclear. We assume this is to mitigate that the cost of the medical bill for injury does not exceed the market value of the animal. If this is the case, the wording should be clearer.

Section 16: Compensation Generally

- **Sec 16(3):** Remove this regulation
 - If a livestock owner incurs medical costs and the animal dies, the amount paid should cover both medical costs and the value of the animal, since they are both financial losses due to predation that the owner incurs.

Schedule 2: The Alberta Conservation Association

Sec 2(2)(c): *the provision of compensation for damage and loss caused by wildlife*

We understand that there has been much debate around predator compensation and that ACA would like to shift the provision of compensation out of the duties of ACA. If this happens, it is essential that predator compensation funding remain intact regardless of where it is paid, as part of a holistic wildlife management program. If compensation is determined to not be the responsibility of ACA, we recommend that a percentage of fees from hunting and fishing licenses and wildlife certificates be set aside and distributed to the appropriate department or organization responsible for administering predator compensation.

For more information please contact:

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APPENDIX

Alberta Beef Producers 2018 Resolutions:

“Be it resolved that ABP strengthen its lobby to the provincial government to address the increasing wildlife/livestock conflict issues, seeking solutions to the present state of mismanagement of provincial wildlife that presently exists and that the solutions go beyond the call for compensation due to wildlife damage or predation.”

“Be it resolved that ABP work with other agricultural commodity groups to lobby the provincial government for greater input on all issues regarding wildlife (i.e. timing of hunting season; bag limits; Alberta Conservation Association; compensation of agricultural losses).”

“Be it resolved that ABP lobby the Alberta Solicitor General requesting that they increase the number of Fish & Wildlife officers to allow for a more timely and effective response to wildlife predation and ungulate grazing of private property.”

“Be it resolved that ABP approach the Federal and Provincial government to review the compensation that is awarded to producers in regard to wildlife damage (especially goose and duck damage) to their crops and swath grazing.”

“Be it resolved that ABP should ask government to change legislation for paid access for hunting and all other recreation to help cover the increased costs of fire fighting liabilities on private land, no matter who, or how fires are started.”