



January 21, 2026

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
1332 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Westerman and Ranking Member Huffman:

The Public Lands Council (PLC), National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), and the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) and the undersigned organizations would like to take this opportunity to express our support for H.R. 4255, the *Enhancing Safety for Animals Act of 2025*, sponsored by Congressman Gosar.

PLC is the only national organization representing cattle and sheep producers who hold federal grazing permits working with 3 national affiliates and 27 state affiliate organizations; NCBA is the U.S. cattle industry's oldest and largest national trade association, representing 26,000 individual producers and the approximately 178,000 cattle producers who are members of the 44 state affiliate organizations who provide much of the nation's food supply; ASI is the oldest national livestock organization in America and represents the interests of the more than 100,000 sheep producers who produce America's lamb and wool.. Together we support and urge swift advancement and passage of H.R. 4255.

Rural communities across the country, particularly in Arizona and New Mexico, are continuing to navigate the challenges posed by Mexican wolves. The density of the Mexican wolf population in the 2 million acres of recovery area in New Mexico and Arizona is at least 3 times greater than other wolf populations that are federally delisted. The Mexican wolf was listed as endangered in 1976 under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, and has been protected as endangered since that time. To date, it is estimated over 286 wolves roam New Mexico and Arizona. According to Arizona Game and Fish, as of March 2025, their census of the population saw an increase for the 9th consecutive year.

Rural communities are most impacted as they must contend with these predators living in their backyard with limited management flexibility of the population. Residents in Catron County, New Mexico have testified to this during a special called County Commission meeting with testimony raising the issue of a pet being killed on the front porch of a residential home. As residents live in fear, Mexican wolves become increasingly habituated to humans, posing increasingly prevalent risk. Livestock producers within these rural communities must also contend with the economic implications as well.

The increased depredation from Mexican wolves has been proven to negatively impact livestock production across Arizona and New Mexico. Mexican wolves cause direct and indirect damage to

livestock producers. The direct damages include the market value of the animals that were confirmed as Mexican wolf depredations (deaths and injuries). Indirect damages include losses due to decreased conception rates, decreased weaning weights, cattle killed by Mexican wolves but never found and the costs ranchers incur from avoiding active conflict with Mexican wolves. Using an average market valuation as of the fourth quarter of 2024 for the 77 reported head of cattle (bulls, cows, yearlings, calves) confirmed as Mexican wolf depredations, the market value of those livestock based on the market value of a cow was \$169,400.

In September, Tom Paterson, President of the New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association and rancher, testified before the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries. In his written testimony to the subcommittee, Mr. Paterson outlined the cost to taxpayers, calculated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

*According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the **cost to taxpayers to recover the Mexican wolf as of December 31, 2024, was \$74.6 million or \$286,839.16 for each of the 286 wolves it says are now on the landscape. The annual burn rate to pay for this program has exceeded \$5 million in each of the last three years.***

For too long, rural communities have grappled with realities of having these predators in their backyards. With constrained resources, limited management flexibility, and the heightened risk to public safety, they look to Congress to act.

PLC, NCBA, and ASI wholeheartedly support the passage of this legislation and encourage swift action to move it forward. Its enactment is imperative to protect rural communities and will strengthen America's livestock producers to continue their essential role as stewards of our nation's natural resources. We appreciate your attention to this critical issue and look forward to seeing this bill advance.

Sincerely,

Public Lands Council
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
American Sheep Industry
Arizona Cattle Growers' Association
Arizona Public Lands Council
New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association

