

John Williams

Oregon Cattleman's Association wolf Committee co-chair

As a cattle rancher in my younger days I learned the cattle industry from the ground up. As an Oregon State University Extension Agent for over 31 years, including over 10 years of studying the impact of the presence of wolves on livestock I have learn how devastating the reintroduction of wolves to the western landscape is to ranchers and their communities. In 1996 Mack Birkmaier, local rancher and past president of the Oregon Cattleman's Association came into my office and told me that an issue was coming that would hit the livestock industry like no other issue in his lifetime..... The wolf..... and he wanted the university to engage in research before they came to be able to scientifically show how disruptive they would be.

I joined a group of researchers from Oregon State University, the Agricultural Research Service and University of Idaho in a long-term research project looking at the impacts of the presence of wolves on cattle. Four peer reviewed publication have been published and several non-peer reviewed but ground truthed papers were written. A shortened version of two of those papers are included in the supplementary information for this hearing. A bibliography of those documents is included at the end of this testimony.

In my retirement I took on the co-chair of the wolf committee for the Oregon Cattleman's Association and continue to work to improve the management of the wolves and to influence the decision making surrounding wolves as it is truly devastating the cattle industry across the west. In areas where the wolf is protected by the Federal Endangered Species Act, wolves attack livestock with impunity and the rancher has no recourse. Some wolves have killed dozens of livestock and cannot be harmed.

My Experience with the Northern Rocky Mountain Distinct Population Segment is that even though we need the wolves removed from the Federal ESA through administrative means, the court system will relist them every time until there is congressional action that delists them. Thank you for the opportunity to present the following oral testimony.

Testimony
Of
John Williams
Oregon Cattleman's Association

I am John Williams, rancher from NE Oregon and I am here today representing the Oregon Cattleman's Association as the co-chair of wolf committee

With the wolves expanding to many areas of Oregon, livestock producers need relief from the economic devastation and the emotional stress they are enduring as wolves' impact nearly every aspect of their operation.

We need to be able to have the ability to protect ourselves, our families and our private property, including our livestock, from wolves. Ranchers are at risk of losing their ranches, their way of life, their homes and their incomes. The production losses due to the presence of wolves, which are much larger than the dead and injured animals all leads to significant emotional stress to the ranching community.

To be able to do this, wolves must be removed from the Endangered Species Act. In Oregon, the wolf was removed from the Oregon ESA in 2015 because the wolf population had met the required criteria and the expansion of the wolf across much of the state has creating a robust wolf population. The eastern ¼ of the state is federally delisted as well. It gives us hope that the rest of our ranchers can gain access to wolf management that includes removal of problem wolves when attacks on livestock become chronic. Ranchers living in the ¾ of the state west of the arbitrary line of Hwy 395/78/95 are living under wolves being protected under the federal ESA. They have no way of defending themselves against a wolf attack, even if a rancher sees a wolf attacking his cattle, he cannot harm the wolf.

Wolves kill livestock as a normal action of their lives. They kill to eat, they kill to train their young and they sport kill. Ranchers, many times, only find 1 in 8 of the carcasses as identified in the Oakleaf study from Idaho. In the process of killing, the wolves traumatize the cattle that are involved in the event. The normal hunting method of a wolf includes running down their prey. Sometimes a cow will not run, but turn and fight to defend their young or must fight when the herd is cornered. Either way as multiple events occur, most if not all, of the herd becomes traumatized.

The Effect of the losses to the producer both increase the producer's direct costs of doing business and reduces the revenue received. The list of costs includes: depredations, reduced weaning weight of calves, weight loss by cows, conception rate reductions and management costs. The first four are lost income to the producer because of reduced cattle performance or physical loss of the animals. The last item, management costs, encompasses a large group of issues that cause increased cost of operation. Management issues can be broken down into costs of implementing non-lethal activities to attempt to mitigate the impact of the wolf's presence; management costs due to implementation of government regulations and management plans; increased costs of livestock handling; increased costs through injury and death of livestock; and the loss of range access because the wolfs' presence in given places makes it unwise, to run livestock in that specific area of range.

To put some context to these losses for a rancher, taken from a paper I wrote in 2010..... For a rancher with 400 head of cattle, the presence of wolves creates a reduced conception rate of about 10%, which costs a rancher \$134.00 per head; Reduced weaning weight, \$46.00; Depredations \$50.00; reduced cow weight, \$57.00 AND increased management costs \$93.00, this all totals up to \$380.00 per head for each and every cow impacted by the wolves. That adds up to \$152,000 for a rancher running 400 head.

The losses are not just economic, they are also emotional and social. Management costs relating to the expected non-lethal are both time and money. The time issue becomes critical as ranchers work to protect their herds, losing family time and time away from their normal ranching activities.

Ranchers feel abandoned when wolves have to be managed under the Federal ESA. Wolves cannot be harmed in any way, even though they are tearing our livestock to pieces.

To state the obvious, wolves are controversial. Wolf management occurs in three arenas, Economic, Social and Political. Ranchers and hunters are the only ones economically impacted directly by the economic costs. Unfortunately wolf management and wolf policy is most impacted by the social arena and the decisions are made in the political arena.

Ranchers need to be able to have some control over their lives, their ranches and their livestock. To accomplish this, we must remove the wolves from the endangered species act. Evidence to support this can be seen in the rapid expansion of wolves into new areas like California and western Oregon and increase in numbers of wolves throughout their occupied range. Wolves don't need the protection of the single species management of the Endangered Species Act.

Thank you for the opportunity for ranchers to explain the impacts of the presence of wolves on our lives.

Publications:

P. E. Clark, D. E. Johnson, L. L. Larson, M. Louhaichi, T. Roland, J. Williams. 2017. *Effects of Wolf Presence on Daily Travel Distance of Range Cattle*. Journal of Rangeland Ecology & Management 70 (2017) 657–665. 8pp.

Williams, J. D.E. Johnson, P.E. Clark, L.L. Larson, and T.J. Roland. 2017. *Wolves --- A Primer for Ranchers*. E.M. 9142. Oregon State University, Corvallis, Or. 12 pp. Peer reviewed numbered Extension Methods publication. (Truncated version in supporting materials)

P. E. Clark, J. Chigbrow, D. E. Johnson, L. L. Larson, R. M. Nielson, M. Louhaichi, T. Roland, J. Williams. *Predicting Spatial Risk of Wolf-Cattle Encounters and Depredation*. Rangeland Ecology & Management. Volume 73, Issue 1, January 2020, Pages 30-52.

Cooke, R.F., B. I. Cappelozza, M. M. Reis, D. D. Johnson, M. M. Borman, J. Williams, and D. W. Bohnert. 2013. *Impact of previously exposure to wolves on temperament and physiological responses of beef cattle following a simulated wolf encounter*. BEEF107- Special report.

Williams, J. 2010. *Estimates of Economic Losses to Stock Growers due to the Presence of Wolves in North Eastern Oregon*. OSU Extension Service. Enterprise, OR (not peer reviewed, extensive ground truthing). (Truncated version in supporting materials)

Other relevant papers:

Oakleaf, J. ,C. Mack, AND D. Murry. 2003. Effects of Wolves on Livestock Calf Survival and Movement in Central Idaho. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 67(2):299–306

Tanaka, JA., Neil R. Rimbey, L. Allen Torell, David “Tex” Taylor, Derek Bailey, Timothy DelCurto, Kenric Walburger, and Bob Welling. 2007. Grazing Distribution: The Quest for the Silver Bullet. *Rangelands* 29(4):38-46. [http://www.bioone.org/doi/abs/10.2111/1551-501X\(2007\)29%5B38%3AGDTQFT%5D2.0.CO%3B2](http://www.bioone.org/doi/abs/10.2111/1551-501X(2007)29%5B38%3AGDTQFT%5D2.0.CO%3B2)

Steele J., Rashford B., Foulke T., Tanaka J., Taylors D. Wolf (*Canis lupus*) Predation Impacts on livestock Production: Direct Effects, Indirect Effects, and Implications for Compensation Ratios. 2013. *Journal of Rangeland Ecology & Management* 66: 539-544.