

My name is Ryan Klussendorf, and I am a fourth-generation dairy farmer. My wife, Cheri, and I, along with our three sons—Kale, Owen, and Max—own and operate a 100-cow rotational grazing dairy farm in Medford, Wisconsin. I was asked to testify today because, like many other farmers in Wisconsin, I have experienced firsthand the devastation caused by wolves.

My testimony is about a gruesome attack that occurred on my farm in 2023. One of my cows, number 2042, was bitten in the back leg and dragged down from behind. With her tendons and ligaments severed, she was left helpless as the pack began eating her soft tissue while she was still alive. By the time she succumbed to her injuries, the field was a bloodbath, making it nearly impossible to identify her. Her ear tags were found over 100 feet from her body, drenched in blood. For you, this is the beginning of my story—but for me, it started months before.

Our nightmare began in June when we moved a group of young spring calves to pasture. These calves, born between February and April, were in a paddock close to the barn, accustomed to human contact and daily feeding. On **July 2nd, at 3:55 AM**, we received a call from the Taylor County Sheriff's Department. A large group of our calves had been spotted in the roadway, a quarter mile from our farm. We rushed outside and found them agitated, covered in sweat, and panicked. Over the next several mornings, we repeatedly found our calves separated into groups, outside their paddock. In **August**, the situation worsened. Twice, motorists alerted us that our calves were loose on the road. Then, on **August 10th, at 2:15 AM**, we received another call from the Sheriff's Department. Again, our calves were in the roadway.

We herded them back, but something was different—they were terrified, erratic, and drawn to light, as if desperately seeking safety. As I tried to calm them, Cheri was being issued a citation for animals at large. We believed the calves were being chased by coyotes, but when she tried to explain this to the officer, we were dismissed. He told us our fencing was inadequate, that this wasn't the first time, and that we should contact the DNR. That was the moment I realized I was fighting a **losing battle**—tormented by a pack of wolves and treated like a second-class, law-breaking citizen in my own county.

We fought the citation in court. We had proper fencing, had made adjustments to keep the calves closer to the buildings, yet nothing stopped the relentless attacks. When we explained our situation to the District Attorney, we were told, **"There is nothing I can do for you. Buy a gun."**

Then, on **November 7th**, I woke early to start chores. Usually, I have to bring the cows in from pasture, but that morning, they were already waiting in the barnyard—something was

wrong. As I walked out to the pasture, I found cow 2042. She might be just one cow to you, but she was **my** cow. A three-year-old, a strong milker, pregnant with a calf due in spring. That day, I didn't just lose one cow—I lost every calf she would have had, every gallon of milk she would have produced. Our cattle are our most valuable investment, the foundation of our farm and our family's livelihood.

As a farmer, my responsibility is to keep my cows **happy, healthy, and safe**. That day, I failed them. That summer was the worst of my life, and it still haunts me. When the phone rings after 9 PM, my stomach sinks. No matter the season, we keep the windows open at night so I can listen to the road, making sure cars don't slow down. I jump out of bed at the slightest noise, sometimes mistaking the sound of the ice maker for someone knocking at the door.

I am not a wolf expert. But I am an **expert** in what it feels like to be hunted—to watch your livelihood be tormented until you are forced to give up. We now keep our cattle within 200 feet of the buildings at all times. Our calves are no longer on pasture. This has cost us tremendously in feed expenses, manure hauling, and stress.

I am a **husband, a father, and a farmer**—but right now, I cannot protect my cows or my family's livelihood without the **risk of prosecution**. Wisconsin farmers need help. **Delist the gray wolf** from the Endangered Species Act and return to a **manageable population of 350 or fewer**.

Cow 2042 may have been just one cow to you. But to me, she was a reason to get out of bed every morning. And now, she is the reason I lie awake every night. Please pass H.R. 845 – The Pet and Livestock Protection Act.

Thank you.

Ryan Klussendorf

Wisconsin farmer