



TESTIMONY

House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

Tuesday, February 17, 2015

Submitted in Support of HB 2050 and HB 2181

Oregon Farm Bureau supports HB 2050 and HB 2181. These bills would allow individual counties to exempt themselves, via a county ballot measure, from the 1994 ban on using dogs to hunt cougars. HB 2050 and HB 2181 would provide a valuable tool to Oregon's rural communities that suffer from the threat of cougar depredation.

Spring is a busy time of year for Oregon's livestock growers. Oregon's ranch families depend on healthy livestock for their yearly wages and spend long days and nights watching over lambs, kids, and calves. However, cougars are stealthy, opportunistic predators—a dog, lamb, or calf is much easier prey than a wild animal. The only way to prevent future attacks on domestic animals is to eliminate the offending cougar, which is virtually impossible without the use of dogs.

Once low in number, the total population of cougars in Oregon is estimated at approximately 6,000 animals in Oregon today. Without the right tools to fight depredation, Oregon's ranch families are losing thousands of young livestock each year to cougars and other predators. In some cases, the mothers are also impacted when they intervene in an attempt to protect their young. HB 2050 and HB 2181 would give communities the ability to more effectively protect families and domestic animals from these predators.

Oregon's rural districts and urban areas have different needs. HB 2050 and HB 2181 recognize those diverse needs and allow the counties that have problems with depredation to do something about it. Farm Bureau strongly supports these measures.

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