

I am writing today to submit comments in opposition of HB 4127. The program, which was initially set up in 2011 to support landowners and build tolerance for the wolves when they were protected under both the federal and state Endangered Species Act, receives \$100,000 every two years from the state. In addition, the funds used for non-lethal practices are matched by federal dollars. Statistically, cattle and other livestock primarily go missing for many other reasons than a wolf depredation. This includes negligence, theft, drought, wildfire, other predators (including domesticated dogs) and illness. In a report dated 2015, by USDA, wolf depredation accounted for .08% of cattle losses in Oregon, while the majority of loss was due to many other contributing factors, mentioned above. In reviewing the total number of cattle vs. depredations, in other western states, which have higher animal counts for livestock and wolves, they statistically average less depredations than reported in Oregon. Another side note, there were cattle losses reported by the USDA, which included loss from Grizzly Bear in several states, including here in Oregon, where the bears do not currently exist in the states eco-systems. Something doesn't seem to add up.

<https://www.humanesociety.org/sites/default/files/docs/HSUS-Wolf-Livestock-6.Mar.19Final.pdf>

OREGON IS THE ONLY STATE TO MAKE PAYMRNTS FOR UNVERIFIED MISSING LIVESTOCK.

“The program’s “missing livestock” component is controversial and unverifiable: Cattle go missing for many reasons including negligence, theft, drought, wildfire, other predators and illness. There are no sideboards on payments for “missing” livestock — no proof of cattle put out versus brought in and no presence of wolves or known depredation in the area. Payment requests are for the full amount of the cattle. These are claims that are not transparent, hard to verify and has been part of many investigative journalism including by OPB and High-Country News. Backfilling the program for this biennium means making up for the missing livestock claims. And these claims are disproportionately higher than confirmed depredation. For context, cattle being the main livestock in Oregon, in 2021 confirmed and probable wolf depredation and injuries accounted for 50 cattle. In comparison, 679 missing livestock claims have been made, mostly based on anecdotal information.” Oregon Wildlife Coalition.

REFORM IS NEEDED!

“The Fund was established in 2011 and to this date, it has not been revisited or revised. We had very few wolves in 2-3 counties in 2011 and wolves were a protected species. We have wolves in 12 counties now and they are no longer protected. Poaching is rampant (9 wolves poached within the last year). While compensation pays for depredation and even missing livestock, wolves are also killed as a response to the same depredations by ODFW. This is not promoting co-existence or building tolerance. Many producers agree that the program is dire need of reform. Their voices need to be heard as well. Throwing money at a problem will not make it go away.” Oregon Wildlife Coalition.

This program is in need of revision and accountability; not additional monies to be utilized for reimbursement of unverifiable missing livestock. It is irresponsible and somewhat unethical to distribute monies from the general fund (constituent tax dollars), under such ambiguous and questionable reporting, which comes primarily from those individuals that will gain from said funds.

Thank you for your consideration.
Renee Espenel