

**Subject: Testimony in opposition to HB 4080 (predator damage control districts)**

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice Chair Hudson, Vice Chair Brock Smith and Members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources:

I am a co-founder of and volunteer advisor to the Benton County Agriculture and Wildlife Protection Program ([AWPP](#)). This county-operated non-lethal wildlife deterrents grant program has a nearly spotless record of assisting ranchers with protecting livestock from cougars and other predators.

I would like to clarify misleading statements made by proponents of predator damage control districts.

A decade of USDA activity summaries obtained through U.S. Government Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests reveals that Wildlife Services does not provide any proactive non-lethal wildlife deterrents to livestock producers. In other words, Wildlife Services does not “do” non-lethal deterrents.

TALK about non-lethal deterrents is the only “significant investment in non-lethal methods of wildlife control” made by Wildlife Services. In the transcript below from an August 11, 2021 ODFW Trap Check Work Group [presentation](#) (at 34:50 min), Wildlife Services Assistant State Director Kevin Christiansen uses confusing language in an attempt to hide the fact that Wildlife Services only provides “recommendations and demonstrations” of non-lethal deterrents:

*“We’re to focus and emphasize on non-lethal measures. What can we do to help the landowner prevent the problem, to avoid the problem, or resolve the problem without the need of lethal, and so we provide a lot of **recommendations**. We also provide **demonstrations**. Teaching them how to improve methods that they might be implementing. In addition that we also will then refer or give them ideas for methods that they haven’t used. For example, for that same time frame, fiscal year 2016 to 2020, over that five-year spread, Wildlife Services reported an average of around 1000 technical assistance to various resource owners. In those, we’ve **recommended** over 2,000 (2,100) types of methods, integrated wildlife management methods, **for them to implement** in addition to the methods that they were already conducting themselves.”*

Farmers don’t need TALK about non-lethal wildlife deterrents, they need funding to purchase non-lethal methods and tools to protect their livestock rather than have Wildlife Services kill wildlife in response to livestock losses.

Respectfully,

Randy Comeleo