

Dear honorable chair Ken Helm,

Thank you for considering my testimony in favor of HB 2631.

I'd like to share my personal experiences with the rogue pack. We have the same issues as many ranchers here in Oregon. Our cattle, mother cows, calves and yearlings all have been involved in some sort of incident. We have had multiple depredations, costing time and money and our cattle have been stressed, resulting in weight loss and even death resulting from that stress. Some of our mother cows have aborted and calved much earlier resulting in very tiny babies that are not fully developed and some of the babies do not make it. We have incurred more costs and have to move cattle much earlier than normal to avoid more depredations and stress on our livestock.

Over the last several years I have learned more than I ever thought I would about a wolf. I work on my families cattle operation here in Southern Oregon and Northern California. My father runs pairs (cows and calves) and yearlings. He came from a small dairy and ranching background. He has build his life and ours around this ranch with hard work and strict morals. I mention this as I have never seen my father with the attitude to give up. The Fall of 2021 I did. It was hard to see and I don't think many realize the emotional and mental toll that dealing with the wolves has on a person, not only financially.

That fall the wolves hit us several times. We had implemented "non-lethal" tactics with NO success. We have removed all old carcasses the previous years, moved the more vulnerable cattle to smaller fields closer to the houses and cabins, used fox lights, scare boxes, spot lights and we did night patrol and were assisted by wildlife services in that and other methods. We ultimately ended up having to move all the cattle out of the ranch much earlier than normal. That fall they hit us and killed 3 steers in one morning. Two mornings later another steer. During night watch, we witnessed the wolves entering the field where the cattle were bedded down. The wolves would move from steer to steer bumping and nipping at them to get a reaction. They would leave them alone until they got a reaction and then would chase them, one from the front one from the back. This is where we would intervene and scare them off. The wolves were not scared of us and had no reaction to the horns. Only the physical driving at them in a vehicle. As I mentioned at this point we shipped cattle off the ranch. However we still were gathering in off the permit (the open range) and still had cattle there until we could get enough to fill a truck. During night patrol we had many other encounters but prevented and depredations until about two weeks later and we had another depredation. All were confirmed as I worked closely with the government agencies. This however took a huge toll on my father and our crew. Staying up late nights, still having to do our normal day to day operation and the cost and stress trying to find somewhere to take the cattle when we had an abundance of feed where they were at.

The mental and emotional toll, not to mention monetary loss is immeasurable. Ranchers across the west are facing extinction. The reintroduction of the wolves just makes it that much harder for us. We have no way of knowing how many we lose on our summer permit. The terrain is rough and vast. I no longer just get on and ride for hours gathering. I do a lot of the fall gathering by myself when everyone else heads to California with the rest of the herd. So it takes me more time and money as I have to hire someone to help on occasion as our cattle are more agitated and aggressive towards me and our livestock dogs.

About 3 years ago, we had a small group of cattle up close to one of our employees cabins. He witnessed on multiple occasions the wolves would come in and “train the wolf pups”. They would corner the cattle up and try and get one to break. Our ranch hand would run them off but they came back. Not every night but they always came back. The wolves had tormented and stressed one small calf so much he ended up later dying. We had him autopsied and he had bite marks all over his hide and his tail had been bit off. However they would not confirm him as a wolf kill.

I have story after story. I have also attended a “wolf workshop” trying to gain more knowledge and be proactive on this matter. The rogue pack specifically is not afraid of human presence. They do not kill for food, they enjoy the chase and kill. In my experience, human presence is the best defense. But the rogue pack is not affected by just our presence. We have to physically chase them off. Whereas other areas have more rights and can actually protect and defend themselves and their livestock. Here in Western Oregon we have no rights. I fear for my safety, my dog and horse when I am out there riding. As of last fall we were told we had 7 wolves in the rogue pack. Talking to people, there are more than 7 in our area.

Asking to be reimbursed at a 7 to 1 ratio is not much considering all the extra time and costs we incur, the needless loss of life due to an animal that should have never been reintroduced to this area.

Respectfully,

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