

# CALIFORNIA LIVESTOCK PREDATORS

## STATUS, CHARACTERISTICS AND OPTIONS FOR CONTROL

Listed in order of reported depredations

CALIFORNIA CATTLEMEN'S  
ASSOCIATION



Since 1917



### #1: COYOTE

**Status:** Coyotes are nongame mammals with no special legal protection.

**Identifying Predation:** Wounds from a coyote kill will be primarily on the back half of the carcass and they usually kill with a bite to the throat. The rumen and intestines may be removed and dragged away from the carcass. Calves that are attacked but not killed will exhibit wounds in the flank and hindquarters and will often have their tails chewed off near the top. Because of their smaller jaws, only smaller bones will be broken in a coyote attack versus that of a wolf.

**Options:** It is not necessary to obtain a permit to kill a problem coyote, there is no season and no bag limit but a hunting license and legal hunting methods must be used. Leg hold traps are banned, as are toxicants and poisons.



### #2: MOUNTAIN LION

**Status:** Mountain Lions are classified as a “specially protected mammal” under Proposition 117, passed in 1990.

**Identifying Predation:** Mountain Lions can kill a large number of animals in one night. They often kill with bites from above, severing the vertebral column and breaking the neck. Unlike canids, they usually feed on front quarters first. It is not uncommon for the stomach to be generally untouched. Rarely is there evidence of a struggle. Knife-like lacerations to the sides, back, head and shoulders may be seen. Wounds will be generally concentrated to the front half of the carcass. Many times after a kill, the carcass is dragged into a bushy area and covered with litter so the lion can return for multiple nights.

**Options:** California Fish & Game Code §4807 states “Any mountain lion that is encountered while in the act of pursuing, inflicting injury to, or killing livestock or domestic animals may be taken immediately by the owner of the property or the owner’s employee or agent. The taking shall be reported within 72 hours to the department.” If the lion is not caught in the act, mountain lions may only be killed if a depredation permit is issued to take a specific lion for killing livestock or pets, to preserve public safety or to protect listed bighorn sheep. Any person whose livestock has been injured or killed by a mountain lion may report that to CDFW and request a permit to take the lion.\* Otherwise, it is illegal to take, injure, possess, transport, import or sell any mountain lion part.



### #3: DOMESTIC DOG (Includes wolf-dog hybrids)

**Status:** Nuisance dogs are not protected under state or federal law.

**Identifying Predation:** Signs of dog predation look similar to that of coyote. Often dogs attack the heads of animals and ears are often chewed. Dogs rarely kill as effectively as coyotes and normally little flesh is consumed but the carcass is usually severely mutilated. Bites may appear random.

**Options:** California Food & Agriculture Code § 31102 states that a dog may be killed if the dog is found in the act of killing, wounding or persistently pursuing or worrying livestock on land which is not owned or possessed by the dog’s owner, or if the person can prove that the dog has recently killed or wounded livestock on land not owned by the dog’s owner. For stray dogs that are not an immediate threat to livestock, county animal control services (often through the county sheriff’s office) may be called.

\* It should be mentioned that under a policy issued by CDFW in 2017, in “parts of the Santa Monica Mountains south of Interstate 101 from Newberry Park to Burbank; west of Interstate 5 to Malibu; north of Interstate 10 near Santa Monica; and the Santa Ana Mountains south of the Anaheim/Pomona area to south of Escondido; an eastern boundary into western Riverside County,” lethal depredation permits will not be issued until the third confirmed depredation report.



#### **#4: BEAR**

**Status:** Black and brown bears are classified as game mammals under California Fish & Game Code § 3950.

**Identifying Predation:** Bears usually kill by biting the neck of or slapping the victim. Torn, mauled and mutilated carcasses are characteristic of bear attacks. They often consume the udder of female victims. Carcasses are usually opened ventrally with organs consumed. Intestines may be spread around. Bears may chase prey a short distance then use size and strength to overcome them, so the struggle is short in duration with little evidence. Bears use their paws while feeding so prey is not slid around as with canids. Large prey often has claw marks on the flanks, but in general wounds may primarily be on the front half of the carcass.

**Options:** Section 4181.1 of the Fish & Game Code states that “any bear that is encountered while in the act of inflicting injury to, molesting or killing livestock may be taken immediately by the owner of the livestock or the owner’s employee if the taking is reported no later than the next working day to the department and the carcass is made available to the department.” For bears not caught in the act, CDFW’s bear depredation policy represents a progressive response system based on the degree of damage caused. Contact CDFW to obtain a depredation permit.



#### **#5: RAVEN/CROW**

**Status:** Both Common ravens and American crows are classified as migratory non-game birds in the US. Code of Federal Regulations.

**Identifying Predation:** Birds will often pick at open wounds and soft tissue of livestock, particularly calves. Commonly, they first target eyeballs to blind and disorient the animal before pecking at the anus, causing the calf to bleed out. Newborn calves are at the most risk. Reports that birds will attack during birth have been made.

**Options:** Common Ravens may only be controlled under a permit from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Contact the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Dept. of the Interior) for depredation permits. The California Fish & Game Code §472 allows American crows to be taken when crows are committing or about to commit depredations upon agricultural crops, livestock or wildlife.



#### **#6: WOLF**

**Status:** Wolves have been endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. § 1531 *et seq.* and 50 CFR § 17.11(h)) since 1978, and have been endangered under California Endangered Species Act (California Fish & Game Code § 2020 *et seq.* and 14 CCR § 670.5(a)(6)(I)) since 2014.

**Identifying Predation:** Wolves usually bring down their prey by biting at and damaging the muscles and ligaments in the hind legs, or by seizing animals in the flank. Downed animals are usually disemboweled. Wolves tend to chase prey to slow it down then bite repeatedly to bring it to the ground, so often some indication of an extended attack or struggle may be present, but not always. Wounds will be found primarily on the back half of carcass with larger bones broken because of jaw strength.

**Options:** It is unlawful to take any listed species. The term “take” includes to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect or attempt to do any of the previously listed. Depredation permits will not be issued, even in the event of a confirmed kill. It is, however, lawful to non-injuriouly haze wolves that are near livestock, specifically within 0.25 miles of animals or within 100 yards of a dwelling, campsite, agricultural structure or commercial facility. For suspected wolf depredations, contact Wolf Specialist Kent Laudon with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife at (530) 215-0751.

## **If you suspect predation, call:**

USDA Wildlife Services State Office (916) 979-2675

USDA Wildlife Services Local Offices

- North District – Jim Shuler (530) 336-5623
  - Sacramento District – Ryan McCreary (619) 666-6418
  - Central District – Brian Popper (209) 579-2891
  - San Luis District – Eric Covington (661) 765-2511
  - South District – John Turman (619) 561-3752
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## **Questions to answer and steps to take after a suspected predation:**

1. Is the animal injured or dead?
  2. When and where was the animal found?
  3. When was the animal last observed uninjured or alive?
  4. Are there any eyewitness accounts of the incident?
  5. Are any injuries visible and if so, describe the location and nature.
  6. If the animal is dead, how much of the carcass is left?
  7. If the animal is dead, did you notice any other animals near the carcass?
  8. If the animal is dead, cover the remains with a tarp in a reasonable amount of time to preserve evidence.
  9. Minimize disturbance to the incident area to preserve any possible evidence.
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## **To report an incident to the Department of Fish and Wildlife online:**

Wildlife Incident Reporting System at <https://apps.wildlife.ca.gov/wir/incident/create>  
(Reports may result in the issuance of a depredation permit for certain species where such is required)

Local Game Warden Dispatch: (916) 358-1312

CDFW Regional Offices

- Northern Region (Region 1)- Tina Bartlett (530) 225-2300
- North Central Region (Region 2)- Kevin Thomas (916) 358-2900
- Bay Delta Region (Region 3)- Gregg Erickson (707) 428-2002
- Central Region (Region 4)- Julie Vance (559) 243-4005
- South Coast Region (Region 5)- Ed Pert (858) 467-4201
- Inland Deserts Region (Region 6)- Leslie MacNair (909) 484-0167
- Marine Region (Region 7)- Dr. Craig Shuman (831) 649-2870

California Cattlemen's Association  
1221 H. Street, Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 444-0845

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