

Thursday 15th of September 2016



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## Better Ways to Protect Livestock than Wolf-Killing, Study Suggests



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September 14. 2016

A new study shows that killing predators such as the Northern Rockies gray wolf may not reduce livestock losses. (Ed Coyle/Flickr)



HELENA, Mont. - The practice of killing predators such as wolves, coyotes and bears to protect livestock has little scientific validity, according to [a new study](#).

Called "Predator Control Should Not Be a Shot in the Dark," the research is published in the journal *Frontiers of Ecology and the Environment*. Researchers from the University of Wisconsin and two other schools evaluated two dozen studies to determine whether they followed the scientific method - and found half weren't sufficiently rigorous.

Derek Goldman, Northern Rockies field representative for the Endangered Species Coalition in Montana, said killing wolves actually can lead to chaos in the pack.

"Sometimes, for instance, when you kill the dominant male and female in a wolf pack, you end up with pack breakdown in terms of discipline," he said. "I've anecdotally heard pack population actually

pack breakdown in terms of discipline, he said. I've anecdotally heard pack population actually explodes, because all the subordinate wolves that previously hadn't been allowed to breed with each other are now breeding."

Goldman said Montana allows a limited number of kill permits for landowners to shoot wolves. He also noted that wolf livestock depredation accounts for less than 1 percent of livestock lost, although much of the loss is concentrated in certain parts of the state.

Goldman said there are other ways to protect livestock rather than killing big predators such as wolves.

"We're strong proponents of all the non-lethal tools that are out there for landowners to protect livestock from wolves," he said, "and those include things like fladry and range riders - which is human presence, which is a big deterrent - as well as livestock guard dogs."

Fladry is the practice of hanging brightly colored flags around livestock enclosures, which act as a wolf repellent.

A study preview is online at [onlinelibrary.wiley.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com).

Eric Tegethoff, Public News Service - MT

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