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STUDY INDICATES FATAL FLAWS IN PREDATOR CONTROL SCIENCE

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A study is calling into question the accuracy of the science used to support predator control practices around the world.

Published in the journal *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, the study dubbed 'Predator control should not be a shot in the dark' reviewed much of the available published literature on both lethal and non-lethal predator control methods. The authors found that "predator control methods to prevent livestock loss have rarely been subject to rigorous tests using the 'gold standard' for scientific inference."

The gold, silver, and bronze standard monikers, as well as the scrutiny with which the methodology was reviewed, were taken from the stringent science of biomedical research, said lead author Dr. Adrian Treves in a yet-to-be-published interview with *Defender Radio*.

"We basically asked, 'what's the state of the science right now? What do we know, what don't we know? We brought it all together in one place and summarized it. We wanted to apply accepted standards... we borrowed from the clinical trials in biomedical research for that and used the terms gold standard and silver standard as shorthand because we knew we needed to communicate this to policy makers and the public and journalists in a way that could be done efficiently."

The upsetting results indicate that much of the available science used to support lethal control of predators to decrease depredation is significantly flawed – and the studies that were not flawed were silver standard only. In those cases, the data actually shows lethal control increased depredation. As a result of the study, which can be read in its entirety at *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, Treves and his team are calling for two significant changes.



TAGS

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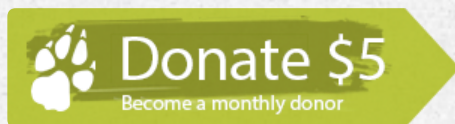
“What we’re hoping is that by calling for a higher standard of evidence used by the researchers to start with, we’re going to push the needle even further,” Treves said. “If the journals, the peer reviewers and the other scientists studying this become aware that their paper may be classified as silver standard if they don’t try hard enough, or if they do try hard they can get the gold standard. We’re not setting up certification, but we are setting up guidelines that we hope journals can follow.”

The team is also calling for a suspension of “lethal predator control methods that do not currently have rigorous evidence for functional effectiveness in preventing livestock loss until gold-standard tests are completed.”

Treves is also prepared for a wave of negative response due to his study.

“I expect blowback, in fact, I expect reprisal. It wouldn’t be the first time where our conclusions didn’t sit with the status quo, the establishment position, or government policy, and we suffer as a result,” Treves told *Defender Radio*. “We lose grants, we lose career advancement opportunities, in some terrible cases we lose colleagues and friends. The public is best served by the system of academic freedom that gives scientists complete independence from reprisals, from concerns about their salary or the safety of their tenure. Especially that science which is feeding into programs where tax payers are paying for it; especially science where wildlife, which are a public trust asset, are benefited or harmed by potentially by the actions. Under those circumstances the public should be crying out for independent science. That’s the only guarantee we can get the best evidence. I expect blowback, but it’s worth it to speak truth to the broader public.”

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