



Does Hunting Predators Really Help Livestock?



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By: [Emily Zak](#) | September 8, 2016[About Emily](#) | Follow Emily at [@EmilyEZak](#)

Growing up in a household that relied on elk meat in the freezer to feed our family year-round, I've always had a complicated relationship with [predator hunting](#). Living in Idaho, one of the first states to allow [wolf hunting](#) outside of [Alaska](#) in 2009, I saw the debate unfold firsthand.

Many hunters wanted to protect [big game](#) like deer and elk, and they blamed wolves for cutting into their populations. Ranchers reported wolves killing their [livestock](#). The state authority, Idaho Fish and Game, viewed wolf hunting as a way to maintain [ecosystem balance](#).

At the same time, activists emphasized that [gray wolves](#) were just taken off the endangered species list months before. The species was [re-introduced](#) to the Northern Rockies after humans nearly exterminated them back in the 1930s. The fact that people don't generally [eat wolf](#) also left me unsettled.



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In fact, state agencies typically offer exceptions for predators that other game don't have. Idaho Fish and Game, for instance, requires [hunters](#) to "remove and care for the edible meat of big game animals, except black bears, mountain lions and gray wolves."

A recent [study](#) pushes me even further away from supporting hunting predators for the sake of protecting their prey.

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Published Sept. 1 in the journal "Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment," the study "Predator Control Should Not Be a Shot in the Dark" concluded that killing predators doesn't necessarily mean fewer livestock deaths. In fact, nonlethal means of protecting livestock, like guard dogs and flag-lined wires, might work better.

"We know anecdotes and perceptions don't get us very far when we're dealing with a problem like [livestock predation](#)," conservation biologist and study co-author Adrian Treves tells [National Geographic](#). "The science of predator control has been slow and not very advanced."

In fact, one of the studies the scientists evaluated showed that hunting mountain lions can actually increase livestock attacks, at least in Washington State. That's because hunters targeted older males, leaving the younger, more aggressive cougars to move into places that the older ones would traditionally avoid.

High Country News offers a glimpse into how similar studies are conducted in this video from December of last year:

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Washington state approves the [killing of a wolf pack](#) that was attacking cows in the area, maybe we should reconsider our wildlife management strategies.

Photo Credit: [Tracy Brooks via Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources](#)

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Sandra Vito 10 minutes ago
gracias

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Sue H. 3 hours ago
It ought to be a crime to hunt predators. Ranchers should be held responsible for providing their livestock protection.

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Nyack Clancy 3 hours ago
Noted; Thank you

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natasha salgado 3 hours ago
Noooo. What an idiotic belief--no credibility whatsoever. This mindset has gotta gotta awaken to fact+reality--and soon i hope.

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Lindsey K. 3 hours ago
You want to get good income at home? do you not know how to start earnings on Internet? there are some popular methods to earn huge income at your home, but when people try that, they bump into a scam so I thought i must share a verified and guaranteed way for free to earn a great sum of money at home. Anyone who is interested should read the given article..
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RK R. 4 hours ago
It is a myth culling predators improve livestock. In fact livestock hurts the environment where predators naturally feed. Besides farm and ranch livestock loss to predators are a business expenses. See Federal Tax Publication 225 causalities, thefts and losses.

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Ammy T. 5 hours ago



Lillian . if you think Mildred 's rep0rt is really cool... on wednesday I bought a new volvo when I got my cheque for \$4869 this past 4 weeks and over \$10,000 last month . with-out a doubt this is the best work Ive ever had . I began this seven months/ago and right away started to bring home minimum \$84, per hour . more information

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Christine Stewart 7 hours ago

Please go vegan/vegetarian to protest the slaughter of wildlife under the guise of "protecting" livestock. It is not only wolves and coyotes that are killed- wild horse, bison, and even prairie dogs are massacred to maximize profit for the livestock industry.

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Beth Wilkerson 7 hours ago

I believe that the science shows that the answer is NO

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field. A wolf pack may kill one sheep on occasion but they naturally control the coyote population. A pack of coyotes will attack the same flock and kill 50. I find it sad that animals are blamed for killing livestock only because humans want to eat the same poor animals themselves. Who is the REAL predator here?

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