

Currents in Biology

FOREVER FLOWING

September 7, 2016

352 notes



No proof that shooting predators saves livestock

On 5 August, biologists from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife ascended in a helicopter to shoot two members of the Profanity Peak wolf pack, which had been preying on cattle in the state's northeast corner. After the cull failed to end predation, the state removed four more members of the 11-wolf pack. Some conservationists were outraged, but the logic behind such lethal control seems airtight: Remove livestock-killing wolves, coyotes, bears, and other predators, and you'll protect farmers and ranchers from future losses.

A new study, however, claims that much of the research underpinning that common sense notion is flawed—and that the science of predator control needs a methodological overhaul. Adrian Treves, a conservation biologist at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and his colleagues examined more than 100 peer-reviewed studies, searching for ones that randomized some by removing or deterring predators while leaving others untouched. Not a single experiment in which predators were killed has ever successfully applied this randomized controlled design, [they reported 1 September in *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*](#). “Lethal control methods need to be subjected to the same gold standard of science as anything else,” Treves says. He argues that policymakers should suspend predator management programs that aren't backed by rigorous evidence.

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Stressing the connections and flow in life and the essential attribute of humility in scientific quests.



“Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known.”

— Carl Sagan

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
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
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
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