

A photograph of a cowboy on horseback herding a group of cattle in a field. The scene is hazy, suggesting dust or mist. The cattle are of various colors, including white, black, and brown. The cowboy is wearing a hat and a dark jacket. The background is a vast, open landscape with some shrubs.

PROJECT SUMMARY

CONSERVATION INNOVATION TO REDUCE PREDATOR CONFLICTS ON WORKING LANDS

A project supported by a Conservation Innovation Grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) to cultivate resilient ranches, rural communities and connected landscapes by reducing the financial costs of sharing working lands with predators through financial and technical assistance for landowner-implemented nonlethal conflict prevention techniques.

Three techniques - range riding, carcass management, and various fencing/fladry scenarios (described below) - are being implemented and refined by a land steward network spanning seven western states (MT, ID, WA, OR, CA, AZ, and NM). Research co-produced by landowners, scientists, and practitioners is ongoing to understand how and where to implement these three practices to best support habitat use by wildlife while decreasing conflict with livestock.

These conflict prevention techniques are critical to an integrated approach to supporting working lands (food and fiber producing landscapes) and wildlife under the Four C's Framework - Compensation, Conflict prevention (non-lethal), Control (lethal), and Collaboration. Conflict prevention techniques support localized spatial and/or temporal separation between predators and livestock within a dynamic working-wild landscape, leading to more permeable habitats that allow for wildlife movements within and across connected landscapes.

The project team, led by Heart of the Rockies Initiative and Western Landowners Alliance, in partnership with USDA-Wildlife Services, Montana State University, Utah State University, Colorado State University and producer groups and ranches are working towards the objectives on the following page to reach the above project goal.

1. Implement, evaluate and further innovate conservation techniques that reduce predator conflicts on working lands.
2. Support collaborative conflict-reduction programs on working lands through a West-wide producer knowledge exchange on effective predation prevention methods.
3. Advance the development and availability of a Non-lethal Predation Management Interim Practice Standard for financial and technical assistance through NRCS EQIP contracts.
4. Integrate the information gained from the project into a user-friendly, comprehensive guide for effective conflict prevention titled Support Toolkit for Livestock Producers Implementing Predation Management Techniques.

RANGE RIDING

Goal: Evaluate strategies, cost, and effectiveness of range riding on diverse landscapes with livestock-predator conflict concerns.

Range riding is defined as increased human presence on rangeland, allotments, and large pastures for the purposes of management and/or observation. The goals and techniques of range riding vary, but often include:

- monitoring livestock and predator activity from horseback or ATV
- managing livestock and grazing use
- preventing and detecting depredations and reducing stress-induced livestock production losses
- increasing communication about livestock and predator activity between producers, range riders, and management agencies.

Assessing techniques across various landscapes and operations will provide information to improve range riding as a tool of conflict prevention. Areas of focus include determining the best possible timing, frequency and duration of human presence and identifying geographic limitations and effectiveness for specific predator species, along with livestock species and age-classes.

CARCASS MANAGEMENT

Goal: Develop location-specific recommendations for carcass removal and processing sites

Carcass and bone pile removal practices are well documented as a tool to prevent attracting predators into areas with livestock, but there are several challenges specific to geographic areas and jurisdictions. This project is evaluating strategies for carcass management under different ecological conditions and will result in a list of recommended practices for community and local government implementation.

ELECTRIC FENCING

Goal: Compile and analyze data on the cost and effectiveness of permanent and temporary fencing options. Options include exclusionary fences like turbo fladry (electrified flagging) and high-tensile electric fence and containment fencing like electric polywire for livestock management.

In addition to commonly used fencing designs, electric fencing or combinations of non-electric and electric, can be an effective tool in preventing predation. From permanent to temporary designs, the scale, costs, and effectiveness are being evaluated.

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