

## Who Manages Alberta's wolves? Hunters and foreign special interest groups

The Alberta government seems to have lost control of wolf management in the province according to documents from a recent AWA Freedom of Information (FOIP) application. In response to pressure from local livestock operators, a number of local authorities – including the Municipal Districts of Big Lakes and Bonnyville plus Clearview County – are offering bounties to kill wolves. In some cases wolf cubs are “fair game.” These actions are misguided; Alberta Fish and Wildlife staff have made it clear there is no evidence suggesting that wolf bounties work in any way to reduce livestock predation.

To make matters worse, local chapters of the Fish and Game Association are also offering bounties for hunters to kill wolves in the Sundre, Rocky Mountain House, Drayton Valley, and Grande Prairie areas. Funding for some of these programs comes primarily from a Wyoming-based organization, the Wild Sheep Foundation. So a foreign special interest group is pay-

ing for Alberta's wolves to be killed without any scientific justification. Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development appears unable or unwilling to do anything about the situation.

Fish and Wildlife staff continue to wash their hands of the issue of private wolf bounties, insisting that it is out of their hands and that such bounties are “not illegal.” Even when bounties are offered on public land (under a grazing lease), the government refuses to take action. AWA believes that it is ludicrous to suggest that a person with a grazing agreement on public land can authorize any hunter to kill wolves on that land for financial reward, yet the province refuses to do anything about it.

If there is an issue of wolf predation on livestock, then there are ways to address the problem without resorting to random wolf killing. Other options include better carcass management (dead livestock are an attractant to wolves), improved livestock oversight at sensitive times of year, and tools such as electric fencing and fladry (defined by Wikipedia as “a line of rope mounted along the top of a fence,

from which are suspended strips of fabric or colored flags that will flap in a breeze, intended to deter wolves from crossing the fence-line”).

Indeed, unregulated wolf kills can have the direct opposite of the intended effect and actually increase wolf predation on livestock. As Fish and Wildlife staff noted in documents obtained through the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*: “It is possible for wolves to coexist with livestock without causing many problems and when this occurs it is important to maintain that pack in the area rather than kill it off, which creates a vacant territory for a pack which may kill livestock.”

AWA believes that, irrespective of whether or not wolves need controlling in some parts of the province, this should be a clear and public decision made by the provincial government and not, as is the current case, a decision encouraged by foreign special interest groups.

- Nigel Douglas