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Animal Damage Control

WOLF DEPREDEATION ON LIVESTOCK IN MINNESOTA
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Depredation by wolves (Canis lupus) on livestock and poultry in Minnesota is a problem for some producers. A small percentage of the farms in the wolf range are affected annually and a few of these farms suffer substantial monetary loss in a given year. From 1976 through 1988, the number of farms suffering verified wolf depredations ranged from 9 to 38 ($x = 23$) per year out of about 7,200. From 1977 through 1988 the highest cattle losses claimed by farmers were 0.45 per 1,000 available in 1979; the highest sheep losses claimed were 2.66 per 1,000 available in 1981. A state program which compensates farmers for livestock destroyed by wolves has paid an average of \$23,269 per year from 1978 through 1988 (range = \$14,444 to \$38,606). Claims of losses (especially of calves) sometimes include missing animals. Misidentification by farmers in the wolf range in distinguishing wolf depredation from coyote (Canis latrans) depredation has magnified the view of wolves as livestock predators. Most losses occur in summer when livestock are released to graze in open and wooded pastures. Some animal husbandry practices, such as calving in forested or brushy pastures and disposal of livestock carcasses in or near pastures, are believed to contribute to instances of wolf depredation. The number of wolves captured on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service depredation-control programs from 1976 through 1985 and the U.S. Department of Agriculture depredation-control program from 1986 through 1988 has ranged from 15 to 64 ($x = 41$) per year. Trapping that is initiated against depredating wolves soon after losses have occurred, coupled with improvements in animal husbandry practices, has potential for reducing both livestock losses and the number of wolves that need to be taken. However, the interface of these predators and livestock in Minnesota will necessitate the continued removal of depredating wolves.