



American Sheep Industry
Association, Inc.

Fast Facts...

on U.S. Sheep Losses Due to Predators

A total of 273,000 head of sheep and lambs were killed by predators in 1999, the last year for which such numbers are available. According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service, coyotes were responsible for 60.7 percent of total predator kills on sheep, followed by dogs at 15.1 percent, and mountain lions/cougars/pumas at 5.7 percent.

Fencing and husbandry practices such as herding and night penning of sheep tied for the leading non-lethal control measures used to control predatory kills of sheep during 1999. During the year, ranchers and farmers spent \$8.8 million on non-lethal control measures.

In 1999, "predation" — the act of predators killing sheep — accounted for 36.7 percent of all sheep death losses, making it the single, largest cause of sheep mortality. It also made it a very expensive one — U.S. sheep producers lost more than \$35 million in potential income due to predator kills of sheep and lambs.

Predation accounts for 11.6 percent of the total cost of sheep production, second only to feed and pasture costs.

Nationwide, an increase in predator kills on sheep and lambs can be attributed to several factors — more predators, fewer and less

efficient methods for controlling predators and insufficient predator-management programs.

For centuries, shepherds have guarded their flocks against predators. In recent years, four-footed "shepherds" — guard dogs, donkeys and llamas — have been enlisted as a predator-control force. They are aided in their duties by electric fences and electric guards, pens, and noise-making devices. While sheep producers rely on these and other non-lethal tools as their first line of defense against predators, these methods are not a cure-all for predation. For example:

1. Coyotes and other predators quickly adjust to sounds emitted from noise-making equipment, which can have the opposite effect of attracting predators to the sheep;
2. While guard animals are more effective than noise-making devices, sheep's major predator — the coyote — has been known to use pack strategies to lure guard animals away from sheep. In several recorded cases, coyote packs have attacked and killed guard animals. Guard animals are limited in their ability to protect sheep against wolf, lion and bear attacks.





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The American Sheep Industry Association encourages non-lethal predator control methods while supporting efforts to establish and maintain adequate predator-management programs nationwide. Chief among these is the Wildlife Services program, formerly known as Animal Damage Control. Since wildlife is publicly owned, the public shares a responsibility in controlling wildlife damage. Therefore, the Wildlife Services program is a joint private, state and federally funded program designed to reduce problems created when wildlife damage agricultural, urban and natural resources or threaten public health and safety.

Prepared by the

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