

ODFW Wolf Depredation Investigation Summary

Date: 8/29/11

County: Umatilla

General Area: Government Mountain Area (private land)

Situation: An adult female cow was found dead in a meadow near a heavily forested area on Sunday, August 28. A black bear was sighted at the carcass when the initial discovery was made. The carcass was covered to deter further scavenging before examination. The livestock producer contacted ODFW and arrangements were made to meet at the site the following morning at 0700.

ODFW findings: Possible wolf/unknown

Evidence of wolf presence in the area? No tracks or scat were found at the carcass or surrounding area (within 100 yards). However, as recently as 2 weeks before the mortality, ODFW Umatilla Wildlife District personnel had located tracks near the location where the cow was found during standard wolf sign reconnaissance surveys on Government Mountain Road. From Government Mountain Road, the dead cow was in view at a distance of no more than 400 yards.

Summary of evidence: The carcass was largely intact and the skin largely undisturbed except for some minor scavenging activity near the bag area and the anal area. Aside from some mammary disturbance, the viscera were mostly intact. Marks on the outside of the hide consistent with bite marks existed on the left cheek and bag area of the cow. Additionally a mark that could have been interpreted as a bite was on the bridge of the nose. When skinned, none of these locations had subcutaneous hemorrhage indicative of pre-mortem biting. Marks were most likely made by the bear seen scavenging on the carcass. The entire carcass was skinned except for a small area on the neck, two small patches on the top of the back, and near the hooves. The carcass lacked any sub-dermal hemorrhage at any location, ruling out predation as a cause of mortality. The area immediately around the adult cow showed little difference from other areas of the meadow. The meadow had signs of grazing by cattle in the area. The vegetation at the site or in the nearby area showed no signs of an attack struggle. The cause of death of this cow is unknown. A tissue sample of the spleen and heavily decayed rumen contents were collected at the time of the investigation. Samples were taken in accordance with OSU Extension instructions to explore the possibilities of poison plants being the cause of mortality of this and 2 other cows that the operator has lost this summer.