

ODFW Wolf Depredation Investigation Summary

Date: 9/11/12

County: Wallowa

General Area: Rail Canyon – Private Land

Situation: On the afternoon of 9/11/12, ODFW received a report of a dead calf in a forested pasture near a water trough. The cattle in this pasture had been checked four days earlier. The area is within the Imnaha Pack home range and wolves were suspected. ODFW investigated the same afternoon.

ODFW findings: Probable Wolf

Evidence of wolf presence in the area? A fresh set of tracks from a single wolf (4”L x 3.5”W) was observed about 200m away from the carcass. No tracks or sign of wolves was found at the scene of the dead calf, though such sign may have been obscured by the large number of cattle using the area around the trough. No GPS-collared Imnaha Pack wolf locations (or any other telemetry locations) have occurred recently in the area of this calf. On about 8/18/12 a wolf depredation (Imnaha Pack) occurred on Jaynes Ridge – about 10 miles from this calf carcass.

Summary of evidence: There was no evidence of a struggle or chase, although the scene had been severely disturbed by the remaining cattle in the area near the water trough. Numerous coyote tracks were observed in the area of the carcass and water trough. The calf was estimated to have died sometime late in the day on 9/10/12. All entrails were missing, and the rumen material was scattered on the ground about 30m east and upslope of the carcass. Most of the muscle tissue had been consumed, though some muscle remained above the pelvis, the head and upper neck, and most of the muscle between the ribs. The skeleton was intact and articulated, with the exception of the right front shoulder, which was missing entirely. The rib cage was nearly intact and most ribs were still attached to the sternum with muscle between. Some of the rear ribs and the lateral processes of the lumbar vertebrae had been chewed around the edges and about 1" of one lateral process had been chewed away.

Pre-mortem hemorrhages on opposing sides of both hocks suggested that they were caused by a predator of unknown species biting those areas rather than by the legs being knocked against hard objects (e.g. rocks, sticks).

The small size and apparent small spacing (1 ¼”) of the marks on the knee/flank area, plus the lack of significant hemorrhage associated with these marks suggest they are bites from a smaller predator than a wolf.

Though the bites identified do not suggest killing wounds by themselves, they do indicate that predation occurred. There is little evidence remaining on the carcass to confirm as wolf. However, the area has experienced confirmed depredation in the past by the Imnaha Pack and nearby wolf sign puts at least one member of the pack near the carcass.