

**RESOLUTION 4-24**  
**SUPPORTING A COMPENSATION MULTIPLIER**

**WHEREAS** predator attacks can cause significant economic losses, but not limited to, death, decrease weight gain, treatment, rehabilitation and lower conception rates; and

**WHEREAS** predation is highly variable from producer to producer and year to year; and

**WHEREAS** the current iteration of the Wildlife Predator Compensation Program (WPCP) poorly addresses concerns and losses outside confirmed kills and producers affected with large losses; and

**WHEREAS** the use of a multiplier to increase compensation would go some way to compensate for unfound kills, kills without enough evidence, time and resources spent by producers locating, treating and deterring predators, injured and or dead livestock;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**

**THAT ALBERTA'S AGRICULTURAL SERVICE BOARDS REQUEST**

That the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation and Environment and Protected Areas work with the Alberta Beef Producers to adopt their proposed compensation multiplier to address direct and indirect losses from predation.

**SPONSORED BY:** County of Northern Lights

**MOVED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SECONDED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CARRIED:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DEFEATED:** \_\_\_\_\_

**STATUS:** Provincial

**DEPARTMENT:** Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation,  
Environment and Protected Areas

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Summary Points:

- Predation has both direct and indirect costs.
- Direct costs are losses from found confirmed kills.
- Indirect losses can be, but not limited to decreased gain, lower conception, missing animals, wounded animals, discounts at market, stress, mental health, and increased time surveilling.
- The WPCP is poorly used as the burden of proof is too high and most producers do not want to put up with the hassle because most efforts prove fruitless. They seem to find every reason to deny a claim even when confirmed predator kills are in the area.
- Wyoming adopted a multiplier of 3.5x per confirmed kill after researchers in Wyoming determined the true adverse effect from predation, both direct and indirect, to be 18:1 and up to 24:1 in severe circumstances. A 3.5x multiplier seems to be a deal.

- Colorado added a 2.5x multiplier for confirmed depredation and 1.6x multiplied to address indirect costs.
- In 2013 the Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association Carnivore Working Group suggested a 2.5x multiplier for Alberta.

ABP is requesting the province adopt a 1.5-2x compensation multiplier to address the extra losses inflicted by predation, such as: other missing never found animals, loss in gain, decreased conception, increased animal stress, producer mental health, financial loss, etc.

Carnivore Compensation Programs Compensation programs for losses arising from the presence and actions of large carnivores have been established in settings across North and South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia. The focus of these programs range from supporting wolves in North America, to lions in Africa, to elephants in India. I prepared a global inventory of all carnivore compensation programs on which I was able to find information in English, based on a review of academic literature, official program web pages, publicly available documents (government and private), and personal communications with program managers. I identified seven compensation programs in Canada, 12 in the United States, and 21 in other jurisdictions around the world. The full inventory is included as Appendix A to this report. Here, I briefly summarize the results of my review. Compensation programs have been instituted by national governments, state and provincial governments, non-governmental conservation organizations, and community-based initiatives. These programs offer support for communities and individuals directly affected by carnivores in order to offset or reduce the impacts and costs of carnivore activity, including depredation. There are three main types of compensation programs. “Ex post schemes” reimburse livestock producers for livestock killed or injured by carnivores after the incident has occurred and has been investigated by officials associated with the program. “Performance payments” reward producers for specific conservation actions in relation to carnivore populations and habitat. Finally, “insurance-based schemes” are programs under which producers pay premiums to an insurance fund and are subsequently reimbursed from that fund when damages or losses occur (Nyhus et al., 2005). Within these three broad categories there is substantial variation, and individual programs may be tailored to fit the unique cultural and legal contexts of the regions in which they are implemented. As a result, programs of similar type may differ in their specific guidelines or requirements. The goals of compensation programs include: shifting some of the costs of conservation from rural to urban populations; promoting good husbandry practices; reducing poaching and possibly the need for lethal control; improving attitudes and perceptions about carnivores; and increasing human tolerance of carnivore activity (Nyhus et al., 2003; Nyhus et al., 2005). Nyhus et al. (2003) describe the most effective compensation programs as being those that maintain transparency, build trust, are fair, and are timely in their verification and administration processes. Despite these goals, compensation programs have had varying success. Challenges include corruption, insufficient compensation levels, and lack of community support (Agarwala et al., 2010; Bulte and Rondeau, 2005; Nyhus et al., 2003; Nyhus et al., 2005). In some cases programs have experienced reduced husbandry activities or loss of natural wildlife habitat (e.g., when the existence of a compensation fund increases the appeal of a region for farming or ranching and leads to expansion of these activities) (Bulte and Rondeau, 2005). Delays in compensation payments, due to limited availability of field personnel to verify carnivore attacks or too few administrative staff to process claims quickly, have in some settings led to user frustration and distrust of the program and its personnel. In addition to these common challenges, the long term implementation of compensation programs have led to a sense of entitlement to receiving financial support, and the costs required may compromise the sustainability of these programs and their ability to continue regular timely payments (Dickman et al., 2011; Treves et al., 2009). Also, supporting a compensation program may reduce the amount of funding and resources available for other habitat or species conservation measures. For example, when compensation payments exceeded expectations in Wisconsin, subsequent budget cuts were made elsewhere in the government department responsible for the program (Treves et al., 2009). Carnivore Management, Conflict, and Compensation in Alberta The Alberta Wildlife Predator Compensation Program is a provincial initiative established in 1974

that provides economic compensation to ranchers throughout Alberta for losses arising from carnivore presence and activity (AEP, 2014a; Fish and Wildlife Division, 1991; Gunson, 1992; Lee, 2011). The program covers losses caused by wolves, grizzly bears, black bears, cougars, and eagles. While black bears, wolves, and cougars are classified as “secure” under Alberta’s Wildlife Act, eagles are classified as sensitive (both bald and golden eagles) and the province’s grizzly bear population 5 has been listed as “at risk: threatened” since 2010 (AEP, 2011). In this section, I briefly review the management and range of wolves and grizzly bears in Alberta; the former being the carnivore species that triggered the establishment of compensation in the province, and the latter being the only species listed as threatened and covered by the program. I then discuss the history of conflict between carnivores and humans in southwestern Alberta, and describe the structure and historical reception of the Alberta Wildlife Predator Compensation Program. Wolves in Alberta have experienced two major cycles of scarcity and abundance over the past century. In the early 1900’s and again in the 1960’s, wolves were systematically exterminated in much of the province as a result of management strategies, including provincially sanctioned poisoning campaigns, anti-rabies campaigns, bounties, and being classed as fur bearing carnivores for trapping and hunting in 1964 (Alberta Wilderness Association, 2014; Fish and Wildlife Division, 1991; Gunson, 1992). Low availability of prey species also likely contributed to these two major declines in wolf populations. In the 1940s, wolf populations increased substantially, possibly due to the withdrawal of bounties and increases in the abundance of prey. Wolf populations increased again in the 1970s during a period in which wolf protection was a primary management goal (Gunson, 1992). In 1991 Alberta adopted a Wolf Management Plan that established a winter population target of 4000 wolves in the province, with ongoing control of the population through hunting and trapping, and a general authorization for landowners to kill problem wolves on or near their properties (Fish and Wildlife Division, 1991). That management plan remains in force. In addition, in recent years the provincial government has authorized culls of large numbers of wolves in specific regions of the province under recovery strategies for woodland caribou populations (e.g., the Little Smokey population in west-central Alberta) (Alberta Wilderness Association, 2014; Hervieux et al., 2014). Historically, wolf habitat in Alberta included the grassland regions, but wolves are now largely restricted to forested areas (AEP, 2009). Grizzly bears have been extirpated from much of their historic range in Alberta as a result of widespread killing, and habitat loss from industrial and infrastructure expansion, and extensive conversion of natural habitat to agricultural land (Alberta 6 Grizzly Bear Recovery Team, 2008; Gailus, 2010). Having once occupied much of Alberta, the current range of grizzly bears is restricted to areas in or near the Rocky Mountains, foothills, and boreal forests (AEP, 2014b). Population assessments for grizzly bears are difficult and expensive to conduct due to the animal’s large range and elusiveness. In 1988 the provincial grizzly bear population was estimated to be approximately 790 animals with approximately 575 bears on provincial lands and approximately 215 in parks (e.g., Banff, Waterton Lakes, and Jasper National Parks) (Kansas, 2002). In 2010, the provincial status report estimated a total of 691 bears on lands under provincial jurisdiction plus parts of Waterton Lakes, Banff, and Jasper National Parks (Festa-bianchet, 2010). In southwestern Alberta, grizzly bear habitat overlaps areas used by ranchers for livestock production. The Alberta Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan alluded to the eastward population expansion of the large carnivore into the Alberta prairies (Alberta Grizzly Bear Recovery Team, 2008). Urmson and Morehouse (2012)’s analysis of enforcement records for grizzly bears within Cardston, Pincher Creek, Blairmore, and Claresholm Fish and Wildlife Districts observed the expansion as locations of occurrence reports spread eastward over a 13 year time span (1999-2011). In 2010, the grizzly bear populations of the Livingstone and Waterton-Castle population units in southwestern Alberta (the area in which the CWG operated) were estimated to be approximately 90 and 51 bears respectively (Festa-bianchet, 2010). Since then the province initiated the Southwest Alberta Grizzly Bear Monitoring Project to provide an update on the density, abundance, and distribution of grizzly bears in southwestern Alberta (“Southwest Alberta Grizzly Bear Monitoring Project”, 2011). The 2014 project update stated that sampling (e.g., hair samples from rub objects) over the three year project had identified a total of 177 individual grizzly bears through DNA analysis (Morehouse, 2014). However, until further analysis is completed this number is not meant as a population estimate (“Grizzly Bear Conservation in Alberta: 2013 Management Activities and Recovery Implementation”, 2014). Carnivore conflict and livestock depredation have intensified in recent years in southwestern Alberta. Large carnivore

occurrence reports based on enforcement records for the Cardston, Pincher Creek, Blairmore, and Claresholm Fish and Wildlife 7 Districts have been prepared for the years 2012, 2013, and 2014 for the Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association (WBRA) (Urmson and Morehouse, 2012). These reports classify enforcement records into sightings, incidents (e.g., carnivore caused property damage, obtained food, attempted to kill or killed livestock, etc.), and human conflict (e.g., carnivore made contact with a person or was harmed or killed by a person) (Urmson and Morehouse, 2012). In 2014, 308 occurrences involved grizzly bears, 443 involved black bears, 66 involved gray wolves, 91 involved cougar, and 16 were determined to be unfounded with no carnivore actually involved (Rettler and Morehouse, 2015). The total number of reported grizzly bear occurrences in 2014 had increased by 57% since 2013, and was higher than any of the previous 16 years (Rettler and Morehouse, 2015). Rural landowners and livestock producers occupy much of the land in the region around Waterton Lakes National Park (e.g., 60% of Bear Management Area 6/WatertonCastle unit is privately owned) (Loosen et al., 2014). While wolves and other carnivores have had a variable presence on the landscape for decades, the eastward expansion and 2010 protection of grizzly bears has intensified management issues. Rural and ranching communities still recall times when mass culling and unrestricted hunting of wolves, and widespread hunting of grizzly bears, were normal practices (Alberta Wilderness Association, 2014; Gunson, 1992; Watters et al., 2014). Transitioning into an era in which conservation of carnivores is a socially valued management objective has been challenging for many people living in this region, as rural land use and livestock practices developed in a very different political, social, and environmental context. The Alberta Wildlife Predator Compensation Program is the responsibility of Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) (formerly Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (AESRD)), and is administered by a committee comprised of representatives from AEP, Alberta Beef Producers, Western Stockmen's Association, Alberta Department of Agriculture, and Alberta Veterinary Medical Association. The compensation program is financed by the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, and is an ex post compensation scheme under which livestock producers are compensated for cattle, sheep, bison, swine, or goats injured or killed by grizzly bears, black bears, wolves, cougars, or eagles (AEP, 2014a). 8 Incidents are reported to, and must be verified by, provincial Fish and Wildlife officers in order for claimants to be reimbursed full market value. If the verifying officer suspects that a carnivore may be responsible, but is unable to make a conclusive determination, it is labelled a "probable kill" and claimants may not receive full compensation, or may be denied any compensation, depending on the circumstances. Confirmed predator kills receive average commercial value for the type and class of animal on the day it was killed with a minimum payment of \$400. Probable kills receive 50% if a confirmed kill by the same carnivore species is found within 10 km and within 90 days before or after the initial claim (Wildlife Regulation, Alta Reg 143/1997). Compensation throughout Alberta under the program has risen from a total of \$68,000 in 2001 to approximately \$274,000 in 2011 (Paterson, 2013). Payouts continue to rise as a result of increasing market prices for cattle and the frequency of depredation events, to the point that claims now exceed available funds (Paterson, 2013). The number of claims has been particularly high in southwestern Alberta. For example, the area of the Waterton-Castle population unit, which amounts to approximately 3% of the province, accounted for 37% of all compensation payments from 2000-2011 (Loosen, 2014; Morehouse and Boyce, 2011). In 2007, the Alberta government hired a consultant to review the Alberta Wildlife Predator Compensation Program and develop a series of recommendations (Lee, 2011). The review concluded that the program appeared to be meeting its fundamental objectives and purpose, but that there were ways in which it could be improved (Lyster, 2008). The Fish and Wildlife Division of AESRD accepted the recommendations in principle, but asserted that implementation was not within their jurisdiction and would be subject to budget availability (Lyster, 2008). Following Fish and Wildlife's response, the recommendations were reviewed through workshops, meetings, and interviews with AESRD Fish and Wildlife staff, Alberta Beef Producers, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Alberta Conservation Association, and the wildlife sub-committee of the Alberta Government Affairs Committee. One recommendation that was adopted by the wildlife sub-committee was to increase the minimum amount compensated per animal from \$300 to \$400 (Lee, 2011). 9 In 2009, the WBRA and the Chinook Area Land Users Association, with the assistance of the Miistakis Institute, conducted a survey in southwestern Alberta that examined the attitudes and perceptions of residents towards carnivores in their region and towards the Alberta Wildlife Predator Compensation

Program. The survey targeted residents within 20km of Waterton Lakes National Park. The results indicated that landowners were broadly dissatisfied with the compensation program. Over 76% of respondents said that they were not satisfied with the program, and 77% indicated that it was not fair (Lee, 2011). Three key issues were identified: respondents felt that the burden of proof was too high, compensation payments were too low, and there were issues concerning relationships and trust between Fish and Wildlife officers and landowners (Lee, 2011).

**Source:** Carnivores and Conflict: A Community Approach to Carnivore Compensation in Southwestern Alberta by Calista Leigh Morrison B.Sc. (Hons., Biology), Acadia University, 2009

- <https://www.alberta.ca/wildlife-predator-compensation-program>
- <https://www.albertabeef.org/files/beef-supply-reports/Vamhs2lgZD1i6eSJQJiVQoTIssPY1IIMsFTd0CqC.pdf>
- [https://summit.sfu.ca/flysystem/fedora/sfu\\_migrate/15922/etd9396\\_CMorrison.pdf](https://summit.sfu.ca/flysystem/fedora/sfu_migrate/15922/etd9396_CMorrison.pdf)