

# NEWS RELEASE

## WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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### **Wildlife managers treat dead calf as 'probable' case of wolf predation**

OLYMPIA – State and federal wildlife managers have determined that wolves likely caused injuries that resulted in the death of a calf on a Methow Valley ranch May 18 and that the landowner would qualify for compensation.

The landowner would be the first in the state to qualify for compensation under criteria established by the state's Wolf Conservation and Management Plan adopted late last year.

Steve Pozzanghera, a regional director for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, said it was not possible to say for certain that wolves caused the injuries that resulted in the death of the calf, although evidence at the scene supports that conclusion.

"The calf was mostly consumed by the time the department was called in," Pozzanghera said. "But photos of the carcass taken earlier by the rancher as well as tracks located in the area were definitely consistent with wolves."

Pozzanghera also noted that the 3,000-acre ranch near Carlton is in an area traditionally used by the Lookout wolf pack, and that remote, motion-triggered cameras had photographed two wolves on nearby National Forest land in recent weeks.

The Lookout pack is one of five wolf packs confirmed by WDFW in the state. The department is currently working to confirm other wolf packs.

Officials from WDFW met May 22 with those from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the USDA's Wildlife Services Program to examine the evidence and develop a response to the loss of the calf. All three agencies are involved, because wolves in the western two-thirds of the state are protected as an endangered species under both state and federal law.

The primary goal of the state's new wolf management plan is to protect gray wolves as they reestablish themselves in Washington, but it also includes provisions to compensate ranchers who lose livestock to wolf predation, Pozzanghera said.

Under the new management plan, ranchers can be compensated up to \$1,500 per cow for wolf predation classified as “probable.” The plan also allows ranchers to be paid up to twice that amount for lost livestock that are “confirmed” to have been killed by wolves on ranches over 100 acres.

In all cases, Pozzanghera urges ranchers who believe they have lost livestock to predation to contact WDFW immediately at 1-877- 933-9847.

“The sooner we can investigate the situation, the better our chances are of determining whether the incident is a wolf kill and whether compensation is warranted,” he said. “We also ask that landowners protect the site from disturbances and keep scavengers away by covering the carcass with a tarp.”

WDFW currently has \$80,000 available to help livestock operators prevent conflicts with wolves and compensate ranchers who lose livestock to predation by wolves. Of that funding, \$50,000 was provided by the state Legislature, \$15,000 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and \$15,000 from the non-profit organization Defenders of Wildlife.