

The Findings of Dr. Robert Crabtree, Leading Wildlife Ecologist and Coyote Researcher

May 17, 2023

Research Summary

Dr. Crabtree's research on coyote populations subjected to varying degrees of lethal control—including natural populations with no control at all—demonstrates the failure of lethal control to minimize predation on domesticated livestock and wild ungulate populations. Instead his research shows that indiscriminate killing of adult coyotes—like that done by USDA Wildlife Services—actually causes social and behavioral changes that drive coyotes, for example, to target unnatural prey sources such as sheep in order to feed larger litters of pups.

Coyotes respond to control programs with a number of complex biological mechanisms, which work very efficiently to boost their numbers. When the alpha or dominant breeding pair is killed, subordinate pack members often begin breeding, bearing larger litters of pups with significantly higher survival rates. In order to feed large and healthy litters, coyotes must increase their caloric intake, which can result in their changing from the natural rodent prey source to preying on sheep and lambs.

In the end the only winner in this killing game is Wildlife Services. Aerial gunning, poisons, bullets, traps and snares provide job security for federal trappers, at the expense of wildlife, taxpayers and public safety. Lethal control is something the public is largely unaware of, and it is out of step with current attitudes towards wildlife and conservation of our wild lands.

Dr. Crabtree wrote a scientific opinion letter for Predator Defense on the effects of lethal predator control on coyote populations. Read Dr. Crabtree's letter at https://www.predatordefense.org/docs/coyotes_Crabtree_letter_5-17-2023.pdf.

About Dr. Robert Crabtree

Dr. Robert Crabtree is one of the country's foremost wildlife ecologists and leading research experts on coyotes. His decades of extensive research on predator ecology and coyotes has been featured in the *New York Times*, *Outside* magazine, and the *National Wildlife Federation* magazine, to name just a few. Dr. Crabtree's work with coyotes has also been the focus of numerous wildlife documentaries and was chronicled by Todd Wilkinson in his book, *Track of the Coyote*, published by Northword Press in 1995.

Dr. Crabtree is founder, chief scientist and president of the Yellowstone Ecological Research Center, <http://www.yellowstoneresearch.org>. He has authored over 60 peer reviewed papers and publications and has obtained funding from federal agencies (NSF, NASA, USDA, EPA, USGS, USFWS), nonprofit foundations, and private individuals to further his important research.