



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

BUREAU OF SPORT FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
IN COOPERATION WITH

NEW MEXICO COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND MECHANIC ARTS EXTENSION SERVICE

BRANCH OF PREDATOR AND RODENT CONTROL

210 LOMAS BLVD., NW, POST OFFICE BOX 1389

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

September 3, 1959

Mr. Eliot Porter
Route 1, Box 33
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Dear Mr. Porter:

We are in receipt of your letter of August 29, in which you inform us that you were referred to this office through Senator Anderson's office. Concerning the questions you ask, the following information is furnished.

In reply to Questions 1 and 2: The predatory animal control work in New Mexico actually was first undertaken by the Federal government in 1913. The program at that time consisted mainly in the control of wolves which were making serious inroads in the livestock industry and it appeared necessary to do some control work in order that the stockmen could operate successfully. This control was undertaken by the employment of paid hunters since the State of New Mexico had undertaken the control of predatory animals by the payment of bounties. This had not proven too successful and when the Bounty Act was finally repealed there were outstanding claims in the amount of approximately \$90,000.00, and for which funds were not available to pay for the scalps of wolves turned in for bounty. In 1919, this bounty payment was terminated and the New Mexico Legislature passed an act to provide for the control of predatory animals and injurious rodents.

This act is still on the Statute books and is the one under which the Branch of Predator and Rodent Control of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife operates in cooperation with the State of New Mexico. This law is now Article 17, Sec. 49, 1701-1705 1941 Stat. Annotated and is supplemented by Chapter 57, Session Laws 1949. Funds are provided at the present time in the General Appropriations Act by the Twenty-Fourth New Mexico Legislature. The Federal law under which we operate is the Act of March 2, 1931 (46th Stat. 1468) and the Act of August 14, 1946 (60th Stat. 1080).

As to how successful the program has been, you will be interested to know that since the passage of the Act in 1919, the Biological Survey (now the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife) has submitted to the State Library under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court copies of all reports made. These were first made on a monthly or bi-monthly basis, later on a semi-annual basis and are available to anyone wishing to avail themselves of the information which these reports contain.

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Concerning Question 3, "What animals are involved?": This also will be answered by the reports referred to in the preceding paragraph. As a matter of information, we are mainly concerned with the control of coyotes and bobcats at the present time, some mountain lions are taken since they prey on livestock and game, and wolves are taken along the New Mexico-Mexico border to prevent their reinfesting New Mexico.

Question 4: Concerning the methods being used, both poisons and traps are used as well as a device using cyanide powder known as "coyote getter". The poison most generally used at the present time is sodium fluoroacetate, commonly known as "1080". This poison is much more lethal to the canine family than to any other animals, and may be used with little or no danger to any other species. It is dangerous for dogs since they are members of the canine family, and it is put out under very carefully controlled and managed conditions so that we have had little or no complaint within recent years of dogs being killed by it - other than feral dogs. This "1080" poison being so selective, can be compared to the use of 2-4-D, which can be sprayed on your lawn and kill the dandelions and at the same time not injure the blue grass. We can, by judicious use of this poison, reduce the number of coyotes and not harm other beneficial life - either domestic or game animals.

In answer to Question 5: This program is statewide.

Question 6, "Under whose discretion and by whose request are control measures undertaken?": The entire program is under the direction of Branch of Predator and Rodent Control of our Service; and the work is done in answer to requests of the stockmen, those interested in beneficial wildlife, and where the control of rodents is necessary to keep down their destructiveness both in the towns and in rural areas. The rodent control has been found necessary to prevent the spread of disease such as Tularemia and Bubonic Plague, the latter disease being carried by lice and fleas infesting the rodents, and has in a number of instances spread to human beings within the State.

Concerning the rodents, when this program was undertaken the area of prairie dogs infesting range and farm lands was measured in millions of acres, and an early report estimated at least 13 millions acres of land infested - much of this area to such an extent that the forage crop was consumed or destroyed by the rodents so that successful range or farming operations were not possible. This prairie dog area has been reduced to isolated towns and all we are concerned with at the present time is keeping these animals within bounds so that they do not spread to such an extent that they again become a menace.

In connection with the predatory animal control, the predatory animal control is necessary to keep the predator-prey relation somewhat in balance. Several outbreaks of rabies have occurred among wild animals, particularly the coyote, and the only successful method of control has been to reduce the number of predators to where contact is broken up, and thus prevent the spread of this disease--much in the same manner as you would remove the fuel ahead of the forest fire and thus let it burn itself out--since it is impossible to cure the animals that have themselves become infected with rabies.

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Replying to Question 7: Control programs are conducted in cooperation with the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Indian Service, and with a great many individual ranchers and organized rancher associations as well as with irrigation districts such as the Carlsbad Irrigation District where irrigation water is very valuable and where it is lost through rodents burrowing in the ground, breaking canals and ditches, and actually carrying the water down into their burrows to underground strata where it would not be beneficial to the crops necessary for the success of the irrigation project itself.

I note you say in your letter that you propose a study that will bear not only on the animals involved but also on other forms of wildlife. In connection with this I wish to quote to you from a 1949 Fiscal Year Report which was on the first lamb crop on the Jicarilla-Apache Indian Reservation in northwestern New Mexico after we had done coyote control work to reduce the coyote numbers. The Superintendent of that Reservation reported for the Jicarilla Indians that:

".....In our October, 1948, lamb sale, 1502 more lambs were brought in and sold than previously estimated and contracted. The coyote control work is credited with a large share of the increased number of lambs saved and sold."

You can see from the foregoing that over 1500 lambs were saved and brought to market that according to the quotation above, would largely have been destroyed by coyotes and thus their entire value lost had not the control work been done.

In another instance concerning the effects of coyotes on game, we were informed by George Ellis, Manager of the Bell Ranch in San Miguel County, that the antelope herd on that ranch which had been stationary in numbers for a great many years, showed an increase of approximately 100% after the coyote population was reduced. The number of antelope on that ranch at that time was estimated to be about 300 head, and had been stationary in numbers due to the fact that coyotes were killing each year about as many as were being born. This increase in numbers allowed stocking of adjacent areas and also provided hunting.

I would like to call your attention to another area where the elimination of coyotes from the area has had an effect on the rodent population in reverse to the generally accepted feeling that since coyotes prey on rodents they are a controlling factor. There exists in New Mexico a large area extending from Carlsbad to Clines Corners, mainly west of the Pecos River, that is fenced with net wire and most of the area is sheep pasture. In much of this area there have been no coyotes for fifteen years or more yet the rodent population is as low or lower here than anywhere else in the State. This is occasioned by the fact that with the coyotes eliminated small predators such as foxes, badgers and skunks, which themselves are preyed upon by coyotes, come into the area in greater numbers and actually do a better job of controlling rodents than was ever done by the coyotes.

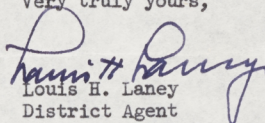
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I hope the foregoing, together with the reports which I am sure are available to anyone wishing to do research, will answer your questions fully and that you will be able to make a study that will be unbiased and of benefit to all concerned. If we can be of further assistance please write us.

Very truly yours,


Louis H. Laney
District Agent