

# Rancher's Guide To Predator Attacks on Livestock

Alberta  
Government



# Predation or Scavenging?

Bears, wolves, cougars and coyotes can be scavengers as well as predators.

## Evidence of Scavenging

- There may be no blood on the ground around the carcass, or blood may have drained onto the ground from body cavities such as the nose.
- Lacerations and puncture wounds found on the hide's exterior do not show corresponding signs of hemorrhaging on the interior of the hide or in adjacent tissue.
- The body may be curled up with the legs tucked in, indicating the animal died of disease or other condition not related to predation.

## Evidence of an Attack

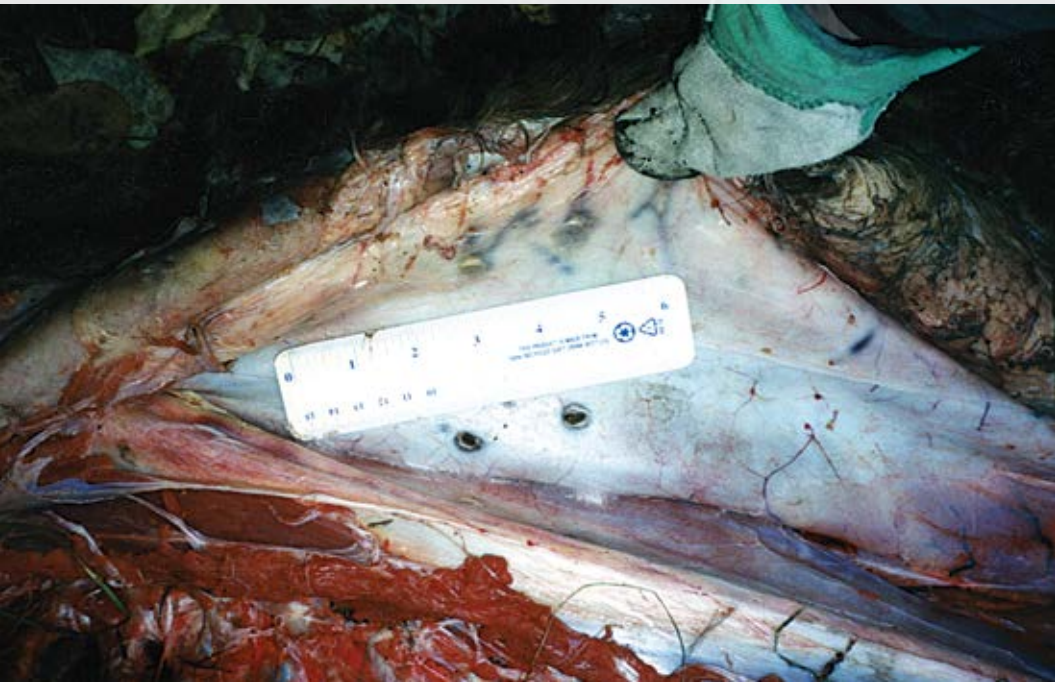
- There may be blood on the ground indicating the animal bled when attacked. Blood stains may be spread widely around the dead animal. There may be a blood trail.
- Lacerations and puncture wounds on the hide's exterior will show corresponding signs of hemorrhaging on the interior of the hide and tissue. Blood may also drain from puncture wounds.
- The body may be stretched out in an unnatural position.

## Examples of Scavenging



Though some feeding has occurred at the anus, there is no evidence of hemorrhaging or puncture wounds on the carcass or hide that would indicate an attack had occurred.

No hemorrhaging has occurred around the puncture wounds.



# Common Attack Zones on Adult Livestock

Indications: hemorrhaging/bruising/lacerations/tears/bite marks/crushed bones

	<b>Wolf</b>	<b>Grizzly Bear</b>	<b>Black Bear</b>	<b>Cougar</b>	<b>Coyote</b>
Tail	X				X
Hindquarter/Groin	X				X
Flank	X				X
Behind and under front leg	X				X
Withers		X	X		
Spine		X	X		
Neck		X	X	X	X
Throat				X	X
Skull		X	X	X	
Spacing between canine teeth	1½-2"	2-3"	1½-2½"	1½-2¼"	1-1 3/8"
Diameter of canine tooth punctures	¼"	¼"	¼"	¼"	1/8"

# Characteristics of a wolf attack

## **Wolves chase their prey.**

During the attack, prey are weakened through pursuit and blood loss.

## **Wolves normally attack their prey from behind.**

Bite marks and lacerations are often found on the animal's hindquarters, and the tail may also be missing or stripped of its hide.

## **Wolves may attack other parts of the body.**

Bite marks can also be found on the nose, under and behind the front legs and on the ears.

When wolves prey on younger or smaller animals, they may centre their attack on the animal's back.

## **Wolves use their teeth in an attack.**

The biting causes hemorrhaging, which is most evident on the inside of the hide and in the adjacent tissue.





## Wolf Attacks

The wolf attack on this yearling resulted in a stripped tail, hemorrhaging in the hind quarters and flank, and damage under and behind the front legs.



The wolf attack on this mature cow resulted in damage to the perineum. The lacerations from the wolves' teeth are broader than those from a coyote.



Black/purple stains on an older, inverted hide shows hemorrhaging caused in an attack. Evidence of bite marks will be visible on the exterior of the hide.



On the left photo are fresh wounds from a wolf attack.  
On the right photo are older wounds that have started to heal.



The wolf attack on this spring calf resulted in extensive tissue damage to the back. The puncture wounds will be evident on the hide's exterior.



**Wolf**

# Characteristics of a bear attack

## **Bears ambush their prey.**

In the attack, bears will not usually pursue their prey over long distances. However, once the animal is dead, they may drag it some distance to feed under the protection of cover.

## **Bears normally attack their prey from the top of the animal.**

Lacerations may be left by the bear's teeth when it bites and by its claws when it attempts to grip its prey during the attack.

## **Bears are opportunistic hunters and feeders.**

Bears will take advantage of any food source when they have the opportunity to do so. Both black and grizzly bears are known to prey on all age classes of

cattle, as well as swine and sheep. Because grizzlies are larger, they may prey on larger animals, such as mature cows. Black bears prey more heavily on calves. Unlike wolves and cougars, bears often eat the stomach contents (rumen) of livestock.



## Bear Attacks



Bear attack to the withers of this spring calf resulted in extensive tissue damage.



The bear attack on this calf resulted in crushed nasal bones.

The bear attack on this calf resulted in canine tooth puncture wounds over the spine.





The bear attack on this calf resulted in hemorrhaging in the tissue in the withers area.



The bear attack on this sheep resulted in puncture marks to the skull and wounds to the back.



# Characteristics of a cougar attack

## **Cougars stalk their prey.**

When hunting, cougars sneak up on prey and then rush it from a short distance away. They will not pursue their prey over long distances. However, once the animal is dead, they may drag it some distance to feed under the protection of cover.

## **Cougars are efficient hunters.**

Cougars normally kill their prey in one of two ways: by biting at the head and neck to crush the skull and neck bones, or by biting at the throat to crush the windpipe.

## **Cougars use their strength and sharp claws to grip their prey.**

In a struggle, cougars are normally strong enough to maintain hold on their prey with minimal re-adjustment. Lacerations may not show marks from all five of the

cougar's claws. The claw marks are knife-like, with very clean edges.

## **Cougars prey on a variety of livestock.**

Cougars typically attack sheep, goats, horses and exotic animals, such as llamas and alpacas.

## **Cougars feed on organ meat first.**

Cougars feed on the heart, lungs and liver first. They use their teeth to chew out a clean entryway rather than tearing at the tissue. Before feeding, cougars pluck out the wool or hair from the hide. Unlike bears, cougars do not normally eat the stomach, intestines or their contents.



## Cougar Attacks



The entry point on this sheep illustrates typical cougar feeding patterns: the opening is in the chest area, the edges are clean, and the hair around it was clipped or plucked.



In the attack on this sheep, the cougar inflicted a fatal bite to the skull.

The cougar attack on the foal left canine tooth puncture wounds in the throat area.



Cougar



Wounds made by cougar claws:

- Top images: lacerations
- Right: punctures



## Characteristics of a coyote attack

**Coyotes attack in a manner similar to both wolves and cougars.**

Coyotes commonly hunt as individuals, but like wolves, may also hunt in packs, attacking their prey from the rear. Like cougars, they may also suffocate their prey by crushing the windpipe.

**Coyotes are smaller than other predators and will leave smaller punctures and lacerations.**

Lacerations and puncture marks may also show the coyote needed to re-adjust its grip on its prey during the attack.

**Coyotes normally take prey that is smaller.**

Sheep, goats and young calves are susceptible to coyote predation.





The puncture wounds on this sheep are typical of a coyote attack. The inter-canine spacing of 1" is less than the inter-canine spacing of a cougar.






## Coyote

Puncture marks are smaller and lacerations are narrower than those left by a wolf.

## Barbed Wire Injuries



Barbed wire wounds are often mistaken for lacerations from a cougar attack. The injuries to the front legs and to the lower part of the rear legs are not typical of cougar attacks.

# The Wildlife Predator Compensation Program

The livestock covered under the program are cattle, bison, sheep, swine and goats. Horses and exotic animals, such as llamas, alpacas or mini-donkeys, are not covered.

Producers may qualify for compensation when livestock are killed or injured by a grizzly or black bear, wolf, cougar or eagle. Attacks by coyotes or incidents of post-mortem feedings are not covered by the compensation program.

Costs relating to both medications and veterinarian fees can be compensated up to the value of the injured animal.

If producers suspect that a predator has killed or injured their livestock, they are advised to contact the nearest Fish and Wildlife office of Justice and Solicitor

General as soon as possible. Call the Report-A-Poacher hotline at 1-800-642-3800 to reach a Fish and Wildlife officer. An investigator will examine the animal. The producer may be advised to move or cover the animal prior to the investigator's arrival, which will help ensure that evidence is not lost due to scavenging.

## You can help

**Report suspected livestock losses early.** Losses must be reported within **3 days** in order to be eligible for compensation under the **Wildlife Predator Compensation Program**. Early detection and reporting allows for more effective mitigation and control actions that may limit further livestock losses.

**Share information with your neighbours.**

Communicating information concerning livestock losses to predators may allow for others to increase vigilance, mitigation and husbandry practices and may limit additional livestock losses.

**Preserve evidence.**

While the protection of public safety and property is a priority, if there is a delay in completing the investigation, collection of photographic evidence from the scene may preserve important evidence that can be lost due to scavenging, further decomposition and other environmental factors.

**Ensure your safety and do not approach a livestock carcass if it is not safe.  
Do not disturb the scene or livestock carcass.**

Use the form and ruler on the next pages to guide in the collection of evidence which can supplement the investigator's findings.

# Reporting

Claimant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Investigated: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Loss: Qtr  S  T  R  W

Loss Reported By: \_\_\_\_\_

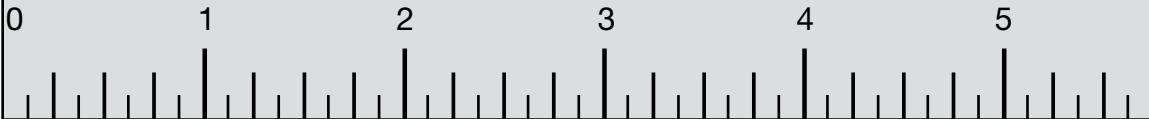
Dead Livestock:	Age	Sex	Weight	Number Killed
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Photos Taken: Y/N

Overall Scene with Carcass	<input type="checkbox"/>	Evidence of Struggle	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Evidence of Blood at Site	<input type="checkbox"/>	Predator Tracks at Site - Ruler	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Location of Attack	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spacing of Bite - Ruler	<input type="checkbox"/>
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# Notes

# Notes

A Rancher's Guide to Predator Attacks on Livestock provides ranchers with information about wolves, bears, cougars and coyotes and the attack characteristics specific to each predator. This guide is meant for informational purposes only. Call your nearest Fish and Wildlife office if you have questions about preventing predation, or if you suspect that a predator has killed your livestock.

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