



Predator Management in Utah

Without management, predators can limit the growth of other wildlife populations.

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) recognizes that predator management is a legitimate wildlife-management tool that must be available to DWR personnel when needed. The DWR also recognizes that although predator management can be controversial, it is important to effectively manage both predator and prey populations.



The DWR is working to limit the impact of cougars and coyotes on Utah's deer herds.



Coyotes are territorial animals that live in areas across Utah. They primarily prey on small mammals, including mule deer fawns.

When does the DWR manage predators?

If predator populations are limiting the DWR's ability to reach other wildlife-management objectives, wildlife officials may choose to implement predator-management plans. The DWR recently updated its policy on predator management to place more emphasis on the protection of mule deer. The updated policy directs resources to reduce coyote populations in areas where deer fawn survival is low. It also increases cougar harvest in areas where adult mule deer survival is below normal.

For which species does the DWR have predator-management plans?

The DWR currently has predator management plans for the following species:

- Ravens, coyotes and red foxes that prey on sage grouse
- Raccoons and red foxes that prey on nesting waterfowl
- Cougars that prey on adult doe mule deer and bighorn sheep
- Coyotes that prey on mule deer fawns and pronghorn fawns

Of these programs, the one that targets coyotes is the largest and most costly for the DWR.

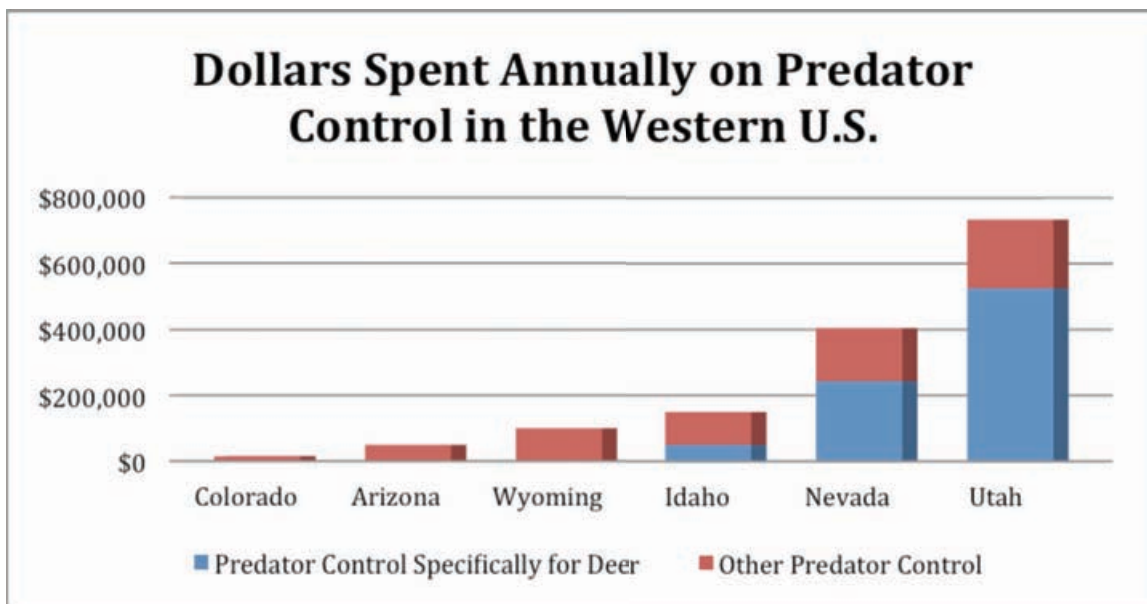
Why are coyotes a problem?

In many studies—conducted in Utah and elsewhere—coyotes have been identified as a significant threat to deer fawn survival. As a result, the DWR maintains an extremely aggressive coyote-management policy. Wildlife personnel focus on efficiently removing coyotes in areas where fawn-to-doe ratios are a concern.

How much does Utah spend on coyote removal?

Over the past six years, the DWR has transferred \$3.4 million to the Utah Department of Agriculture for coyote management. Most of the money is used by the Department of Agriculture to fund state and USDA-Wildlife Services trappers, aerial hunters and sharpshooters. They help implement predator management plans and target coyotes in the right areas, at the right time of the year.

The following chart illustrates Utah's investment in all predator control, as compared to neighboring western states.



Why are biologists directing removal efforts?

Science shows that the targeted use of predator control can be beneficial, but if done haphazardly, it can become an inefficient use of limited resources. The DWR uses the best available scientific data in deciding when and where to use predator management (as detailed in the predator-management plans).

Appropriately targeting and timing predator-removal efforts is essential in reducing the impact that coyotes have on deer fawn survival. In Utah, wildlife professionals typically remove coyotes from deer-fawning grounds and during the coyote breeding season (usually January–March).

Coyote pairs with young offspring are much more likely to kill deer fawns because of the increased demand for food associated with raising pups. Focusing coyote-control efforts during the breeding season limits coyote reproduction and provides the greatest protection for deer fawns.

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