

Wolf Depredation Statute Updated

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The Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association in cooperation with rural legislators, the Minnesota's Sheriff's Association, and officials at the MN Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources developed the changes to increase the local resources to investigate wolf attacks.

The legislative changes also strike language that many livestock producers considered offensive and accusatory in nature as to whether farmer or rancher had intentionally managed their animals in a manner that had invited wolf attacks.

That language required investigators in addition to investigating whether a wolf attack had taken place also required them to determine if there were any deficiencies in the livestock owner's management practices and report those to the Commissioner of Agriculture.

That language was added to statute back in 2001 when the state adopted the Minnesota Wolf Management Plan. The language was demanded by groups that were viscerally opposed to any action that might move the wolf closer to delisting and removal from federal protection. A small but strident group were insistent that livestock producers must be operating in a manner that intentionally invited wolf attacks and the government should start with that precept when investigating a wolf attack.

Unfortunately, some of that sentiment remains today with groups that continue to try to perpetuate the myth that livestock producers have no regard for the safety and welfare of their livestock and are wolf haters that will only be satisfied with their total elimination. It has always been fundamental to the Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association policy on wolves that, *"wolves have their rightful place in the wild and simply need to be properly managed when they come into conflict with humans, domestic livestock and family pets."*

Other portions of the statute remain basically unchanged. Owners may be reimbursed at the fair market value of the destroyed animal(s). The minimum claim level (\$100 or greater) and annual compensation cap (not to exceed \$20,000 per owner per year) remain the same.

The University of Minnesota Extension Service will remain responsible for evaluating what the fair market value of an animal is based on the type of livestock lost and current market conditions.

Investigators must make a personal inspection of the site where the attack took place, record their observations and make a recommendation as to whether the loss was likely caused by a wolf. The recommendation is forwarded to the Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture as part of the claim filed by the livestock owner.

Procedures for contesting a denied claim also remain unchanged. The denial must be in writing and provide the facts on which the decision to deny is based on. A livestock owner may challenge a denial via "trial de novo" in a court in the county where the loss occurred.

Cattlemen throughout Minnesota can be proud of the Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association leadership on this issue. Since wolves first expanded back into agriculture lands and became a problem MSCA has ensured that producers have recourse from the losses caused by wolves killing livestock. That leadership has ensured that funding is provided to pay for the damages caused by wolves and ensuring investigation and the claim process involves the minimum amount of red tape and complication.

This bill makes great progress in dealing with the depredation issue, but the ultimate goal of MSCA is to get the wolves removed from federal protection and back under state control. When that happens livestock producers will again have the legal right to defend their livestock against wolf attacks. *Today, it remains a federal felony to harm a wolf that is attacking domestic livestock or a family pet.*

The Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association Board of Directors held their quarterly meeting on March 6th, 2010 at Hutchinson, Minnesota.

Secretary & Treasurer's reports were approved as presented. The association's current financial position included \$50,230 in the checking account and \$30,000 in CD's. Expenses to date were generally within budget and revenue up primarily due to a very successful Annual Convention and Trade Show back in December.

Reports were presented on the NCBA convention that took place at the beginning of February, 2010. The Quiz Bowl Team did very well taking 2nd place in the competition. Shelby Schiefelbein took 1st place in her age group in the public speaking contest.

MSCA was successful in getting two national policy resolutions renewed with slight changes made to bring them up to date with the current situation. One resolution continued NCBA support for funding of the USDA/APHIS Wildlife Services Agency and the other continued NCBA's support for delisting of wolves.

Dale Lueck briefed the group on progress on the lawsuit to delist the wolves. By a unanimous vote the MSCA directors formerly declared MSCA's support for the lawsuit and authorized a donation to the legal efforts to get delisting done.

MSCA's website mnsca.org continues to expand, providing a ready source of timely information on association's activities and issues that are facing the industry. Steve May and Gary Titus have done an excellent job on rebuilding the website into an effective communication tool.

The directors approved plans to hold a MSCA day at the capital for later in March. Steve May and Bruce Kleven will coordinate the day long event which provides cattlemen with a chance to meet face to face with their state senator and representative.

Regional Directors from around the state reported on activities going in their region. Annual deer removal and testing in the TB zone was underway. This year thanks to pressure by cattlemen the removal effort will also involve removing a small herd of elk in the Lancaster area. A group of about 16 elk which are believed to have escaped domestic elk mixed in have been extremely destructive to winter hay supplies. The group of elk were not only wrecking stored hay supplies, they have also chased cattle away from their hay feeders.

The Minnesota Cattlemen Association (based near Leader, MN) will hold a local cattle tour on August 21st. The tour will preview feeder cattle that will be for sale by private treaty. Next meeting is July 12th.



Steve May



From the MSCA
Executive Director's Desk

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It is the month of May and with it comes optimism for days full of sunshine. Many cattlemen had a particularly harsh weather with an unprecedented number of large snowstorms. As a result, we were bracing for flooding and a late spring. Guess what, it didn't happen!

News reports in the national media this morning are reporting about an upturn in beef prices. (When was the last time you read a positive story in the media?) Most of you have participated in the resurgence and we can look forward to more good times. Two of the drivers for improved prices are a reduced cattle numbers and DEMAND. As the national and global economies improve, consumers are eating more beef.

Membership in Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association is the lifeblood of organization. On the national level, MSCA has some leaders in the membership contest. Mark Malacek (Redwood Cattlemen), Paul Boyum (Fillmore County Cattlemen), Tom Helfter (Le Sueur County Cattlemen), Greg Graff, Redwood Cattlemen and Dennis Sleiter (West Central) are leading the pack in recruiting new members. Thank you and keep up the outstanding work.

We have a great story and that is helping our efforts to increase membership. If you want more information on membership, check out the web site www.mnsca.org.

MSCA needs your help. While the cattle industry has a lot going for us, many people are working on legislative activities that could impact your ability to make a living from raising beef. The way that you operate today is under attack. Some of the issues that are facing the industry include: the use of antibiotics, water management, animal care and taxes to name a few. MSCA is working with other like minded agricultural organizations to make our voice heard on these issues.

For the cattlemen in the northern part of the state the gray wolf issue is particularly troublesome. As you know, the wolf is listed as an endangered species which means you can't harm them even if they are attacking your cattle. MSCA has been very involved in getting legislation through that would authorize local sheriff's departments and USDA animal control officers to perform an initial investigation of suspected wolf kills. The intent of this legislation is to provide additional resources to argument our MN DNR Conservation Officers in this task.

The clues that explain what happened in a depredation incident are extremely perishable. By adding more capacity to investigate, in most cases producers should be able to get someone on sight within 24 hours of a report. That will help everyone out, as within most counties conservation officers and sheriff's deputies already work together on a wide range of issues. This will provide more flexibility in ensuring incidents investigated and are classified as soon as possible.

One of our members (Dale Lueck) has sued the federal government to force them to abide by federal law and delist the wolf. The MSCA Board of Directors at the March quarterly meeting by unanimous vote signaled MSCA's strong support for this effort. An initial donation was made to the cause and MSCA will monitor the situation and provide additional support as this action unfolds. A third activity that MSCA has been involved in is helping get some federal funds to back up the state wolf depredation funds which some years runs out before new funds are available. If you want to get involved directly in our legislative activities, contact MSCA's president Ted Reichmann, there is plenty of work to go around!

One of the best events of the year is the Summer Tour. This year, West Central is hosting this great event on July 12 - 13. Rhonda Wulf has taken the lead on this event and she has an impressive committee. They have an outstanding tour planned which is going to demonstrate the best that our industry has to offer. For more information, check out the web site. When you see Rhonda and the rest of the planning committee, be sure to thank them for their outstanding work.

The cattle industry is entering a period of prosperity. To ensure that you're able to operate with limited regulation we need YOU to get involved. Contact any member of the leadership team and they can find a role for you. Regards, Steve

Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association Sponsored Educational Scholarships

The Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association is pleased to announce applications are being taken for the 2010 MSCA Educational Scholarship Programs. If you are working towards a Degree in Animal Science or Agronomy MSCA may be able to help defer some of your educational expenses.

Dennis Bottem Memorial Scholarship

A \$500 educational scholarship is available through the Dennis Bottem Memorial Scholarship Foundation for a deserving student majoring in animal science or agronomy.

Reid Mason Memorial Scholarship

A \$500 educational scholarship is available from the Reid Mason Memorial Scholarship Foundation for a deserving student majoring in animal science with an emphasis on beef cattle.

Scholarships will be presented at the MSCA Annual Convention Banquet Dinner on Saturday evening December 4, 2010. For more info email MSCA Exec at: maysteve@comcast.net or call (952) 920-9512.

Applications are available on the MSCA website: mnsca.org or the MSCA Office, 3901 Joppa Ave. South, St. Louis Park, MN 55416. Applications are due in the MSCA Office no later than Nov. 12, 2010.

Get Your 2010 IRM Book

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