



Colorado Wool Growers Association

PO Box 292 ° Delta, CO 81416-0292 (970) 874-1433 ° (970) 874-4170 fax
 cwgawool@aol.com ° coloradosheep.org

Colorado State Capitol
 House of Representatives
 State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee

March 28, 2016

RE: HB16-1220 Black Bear Hunting August

Dear Committee Members:

The Colorado Wool Growers Association was established in 1926 and represents the vast majority (by production volume) of sheep farmers and ranchers in the state. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input on HB16-1220.

The Colorado sheep industry periodically gets sheep and lamb loss reports from National Agricultural Statistics (NASS) Colorado Field Office. The most current predator loss data is from 2014.

<u>Year</u>	<u># sheep/lambs killed by bears</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Total Number of Breeding Sheep/Lambs</u>
2005	2,300 head	\$269,800	170,000
2007	7,900 head	\$824,100	190,000
2009	3,800 head	\$436,200	205,000
2011	1,700 head	\$320,600	175,000
2014	4,200 head	\$846,500	170,000

**Bear kills and values derived from the NASS Colorado Sheep & Lamb Losses Reports

**Total sheep numbers derived from the NASS Colorado Agricultural Statistics Reports

As you can see, every year the sheep producers incur significant losses from bear depredation. Loss of traditional predator management tools have made it more difficult and costly for sheep producers to deal with bears that injure and kill thousands of sheep and lambs every year. While some producers continue to struggle with increased bear depredation on individual farms and ranchers, the statistics show an overall decrease in losses, even with a rapidly expanding bear population. We believe this overall decrease is due to the amount of time and resources spent by Colorado Parks and Wildlife and USDA Wildlife Services to remove problem bears. Several years ago, CPW and Wildlife Services shared resources to put additional field staff on the ground to try and keep up with the increasing number of bear conflicts in Colorado.

The increasing number of bear conflicts with people is very alarming and also very dangerous, for both the people and the bears. While some bears are able to be relocated, bears that show aggression towards people or have repeated contact are killed.

A positive management option is provided by HB16-1220 by creating the August black bear hunt, and additionally providing the Wildlife Commission the authority to authorize bear hunting starting in August. This option will allow sportsmen the opportunity to take more black bears and help reduce the over-population. Additionally, more hunting pressure will help make bears more leery of contact with humans. Consequently, it may lead to a reduction in conflicts and in the amount of time and resources spent by CPW and Wildlife Services to address conflicts.

The CWGA believes that wildlife management decisions should be made by experts, and "ballot box management" is based on emotion and limits the flexibility that our state agency should have to manage Colorado's black bear population.

Sincerely,

Barrie Brown

Executive Director