

# **Never Cry Wolf – Protect your herd from predators!**

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In Ontario, many livestock operations include extensive pastures which feature ravines, scrub land and woodlots. These situations are likely to be attractive to predators such as wolves, coyotes and bears.

## **Close The Door To Temptation**

Bury deadstock and afterbirth under two feet of soil or in a compost bin. Make sure the compost heap is secure.

If available, use the services of a rendering facility which will pick up deadstock at your farm.

## **Minimize Risk With Management**

- Use easy calving bulls. Difficult calvings weaken cows, and big newborns can be slower getting going, increasing predation risk.
- Take advantage of increased calf vigour and cow maternality through planned crossbreeding.
- Check cows regularly. Intervene when necessary.
- Have a defined breeding season. Calving seasons that drag on often see cow checks become less regular, leaving tail-enders at higher risk.
- Keep pregnant cows and young calves out of bush pastures. Bush = cover for predators.
- Maintain fences. This keeps young calves from wandering outside of the calving area.
- Use high-powered electric fences to discourage predators from entering the pasture.
- Protect your livestock with animal guardians. Llamas, donkeys, and guard dogs can effectively discourage predators.
- Select cows with high "mothering ability". They will defend their calves against attack.

## **Know Thine Enemy**



Wolves primarily attack young calves, although they can prey on cattle. In a study of wolf kills conducted in Alberta (from 1980-1987), calves made up about 70 % of the cattle identified as being killed by wolves. Wolf kills occur most often from July to September, when calves are in the 4 to 7 month old range. The young wolf pups are being trained to hunt at this time, and domestic livestock represent ideal teaching aids. Wolf attacks focus on the hindquarters, including the tail, thigh, and rectal areas. They may also attack the face, front legs, flank and upper shoulders.

Coyotes tend to attack young calves. The Alberta study showed that calves one month old or less make up about 80 % of all cattle kills by coyotes. One third of the calves were less than one day

old when killed. Coyotes attack the flank of the newborn calf. They rip open the abdomen and devour internal organs. Coyotes may also leave bite marks on the top of the calf's back.

Black bears tend to select calves under six months to kill. They will also kill yearlings and adults. Bears bite and claw the top of the neck and back of cattle. They often wound their prey, leaving claw marks along the shoulder and back, and tooth marks on the back and neck.



Ravens like to rake hair out of livestock in the spring to build their nests. They will also attack newborn calves, plucking their eyes out, before beginning to eat them.

Constant vigilance is necessary. If prevention fails, remove offending predators by lethal means. Provide protection for the herd by using solid management practices and disposing of deadstock and afterbirth prudently.