



September 25, 2014

Statement on Predator Control Methods - Endorsing Best Practices

Adopted by the Sonoma Humane Society Executive Director & Board of Directors

Throughout California, tens of thousands of large wild animals such as bobcats, mountain lions, foxes, and coyotes are killed each year, under the guise of protecting private ranchers and their livestock. This is done through contracts with the federal government, using indiscriminate methods employed by the USDA's Wildlife Services.¹ These methods are cruel, fiscally and practically ineffective, and have resulted in larger problems for ranchers, wildlife, habitats and self-sustaining ecosystems. This inhumane system of control is not only counter-productive, but is also a waste of local community tax dollars.

Large predator animals have been an integral part of our area's ecosystem. A balanced system is critical to the survival of many seemingly unrelated species in the plant and animal kingdom, and when the top of the pyramid is interrupted unnaturally, the balance can be disturbed, potentially permanently and catastrophically.

Even so, there is a recognized need for farmers and ranchers to protect their herds from predators. For the past several decades, the federal government's "control" of predator animals (mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes, foxes, etc.), for the purpose of protecting farm and ranch animals, has been one of a single and inhumane focus. According to a 2013 investigative report, US Wildlife Services kills tens of thousands of native animals in California each year, using steel-jaw traps, wire snares, and body-crushing traps. While target animals are generally of the large predator type, the traps injure and kill many non-target animals, including thousands of household pets and even people.²

Recently the counties of Sonoma and Humboldt have announced that they are considering other options than those in use by the federal government. Proven alternatives such as the use of guard dogs, improved fencing, motion and light sensors, and night corrals have been proven effective in reducing the amount of livestock losses due to predation. For example, the Marin

¹ "Counties Urged to Sever Ties With 'Rogue' Federal Wildlife Agency," Chris Clarke, KCET, July 1, 2014

² "Suggestions in changing Wildlife Services range from new practices to outright bans," Tom Knudsen, Sacramento Bee, May 6, 2012

County Livestock and Wildlife Protection Program is a model that has seen predation decrease by over 60% in the past 13 years, at about one-third of the cost of using past practices.³ This cooperative, community based, cost-effective and ecologically beneficial model has proven to help ranchers better protect their livestock and prevent depredations using non-lethal and far more sensible means.

When a program funded by and promoted with public taxpayer money is found to be archaic and in conflict with a community's values, and a more humane, efficient and cost-effective program is readily available, we believe that the more modern and civilized alternative deserves implementation.

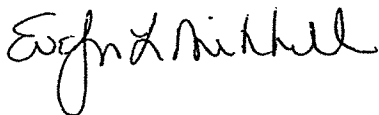
The Sonoma Humane Society (SHS) supports, promotes and strives to be the foremost advocate for the best policies, procedures, and practices as they apply to the animals of Sonoma County and beyond. Towards the accomplishment of these goals, the Executive Director and SHS Board of Directors adopt the following statement:

SHS supports and endorses non-lethal methods of predator control, and vehemently opposes the indiscriminate killing of native predators through the methods employed by USDA Wildlife Services. Non-lethal control is a more humane, effective, and cost-efficient way to address wildlife conflicts. We urge all levels of our government to review and adopt these non-lethal methods as proven by those in use in Marin County.

We adopt this position today, September 25, 2014 and declare it to be in accordance with the Sonoma Humane Society mission statement: *Ensuring every animal receives protection, compassion, love and care.*



**Kiska Icard, Executive Director
Sonoma Humane Society**



**Evelyn Mitchell, President
Sonoma Humane Society Board of Directors**

³ "Wildlife Services' War on Wildlife", Animal Legal Defense Fund website (www.ALDF.org), undated