

Wolf Attack- a Cow Man's Worst Nightmare

March 2015

Wolves attacked and stampeded 250 head of very pregnant cows (start date March 1) on the Birkmaier private land on Crow Creek pass February 12, 2015. The cows were wintering on the open bunch grass range receiving 1/2 feed of alfalfa hay. This 1700 acre piece of land is about 10 miles NE of Joseph These cows were to be moved to the Birkmaier home ranch at the mouth of Crow Creek the last of February (ranch is about 20 miles north).

With no warning from agency people, who normally warn producers of wolves in the area, the wolves attacked in the night. The herd split into three groups, one group of about 70 cows went east, running in total panic, obliterating several barb wire fences. These cows ran about 2 miles to the Zumwalt road then south and west about 5 miles down the OK gulch road to the Wallowa Valley, then north to the Birkmaier ranch land, about 3 miles, then reversed and ran about three miles south where they were stopped. These cattle were wet from the condensation of cold air on their overheated bodies, their tongues were out gasping for air.

Another bunch went north through several fences to the Krebs ranch, about 4 miles, then back and were going in a large circle still running when they were stopped. A third bunch stayed in the pasture, but were in a high state of panic. The cattle could not be fed for two days. They ran away from hay and the pickup trying to feed them. None were killed, no broken legs or stifled joints, some cuts from barbed wire, not serious. We thought we were lucky, the rest of the story we feared would be told at calving time and maybe before. By the way, the attacking wolves, from the Umatilla Pack, were at Dug Bar on the Snake River the next day (32 air miles away and over a mile climbing and descending).

Now about Fladry and why it wasn't used. Fladry was not an option under these conditions on a large area with cattle grazing out in the winter time. Fladry is an electric wire with strips of colored plastic attached. Wolf cheer leaders, both local and everywhere claim this cure-all from wolf attacks is the answer to end all wolf depredations. Our experience – it may have a place on small acreages, we find it hard to keep it electrified. Wet snow will take it to the ground, wind blows tumble weeds and mustard plants into it and if you use existing fences to put it on wind blows it into the wires of existing fence and shorts it out. To use on larger acreages requires a separate fence and many electric fence controllers and is just impractical. In the early days of the wolf debate it was offered as a tool by the agencies and enviro groups to suck stock producers in to thinking they could use this to protect their animals. If it was practical it

probably wouldn't be stacked up in the court house. Talking to other ranches in other states confirms our belief that most ranchers know it doesn't work, and so does the wolf.

As I write this on the 11th day of March, 50 cows have calved. Our worst fears are coming true; one aborted a few days after the attack; three backwards hind feet first; one upside down and backwards; the hind leg of this calf penetrated both the vaginal and rectal walls; one more upside down and backwards; one tail first (breech); two with legs turned back; one with head turned back; several vaginal prolapses probably caused by improperly positioned calves. **Is this indirect loss or what?**

My son Tom and his wife Kelly have had to deal with this horrible task night and day, thirty one miles from vet clinics and assistance. What kind of people support turning the terrorist of the animal kingdom loose on these defenseless animals and inflicting this kind of pain and loss? When I think of my family out in the barn trying their best to save these poor animals, it takes hours with good luck to straighten and get them out—I get damn mad. Who do I blame? After devoting about 10 years of my life fighting this invasion of wolves from neighboring states through the political system, attending numerous ODFW hearings and workshops all over the state and participating in the largest “no wolf” hearing in the state of Oregon at Enterprise, OR, and losing it all when we were slam dunked by the ODFW commission in Troutdale, who by the way didn't have guts enough to attend the Enterprise hearing, Yea, I'm bitter.

We lost eight calves this summer, we were compensated for one. If we aren't compensated for indirect loss from wolves, our ranch and all others are in serious jeopardy.

Mack Birkmaier

Wallowa County