



# NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture  
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE  
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## MONTANA SHEEP & LAMB LOSSES – 2020

Montana sheep and lamb producers lost 40,500 animals to weather, predators, disease and other causes during 2020, representing a total value of \$7.77 million, according to a survey conducted by USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Mountain Regional Field Office. This study was undertaken at the request of the Montana Wool Growers Association who also provided funding. The total number of sheep and lambs lost was 5,500 head less than last year and the total value of inventory lost was down 1 percent from a year ago. The January 1, 2020 inventory was 200,000 head. The lamb crop for 2020 was 169,000 head. Lambs lost before docking during 2020 was 11,500 head. Sheep and lamb deaths for 2020 amounted to 10.6 percent of the 2020 sheep and lamb supply (inventory plus lamb crop plus lambs lost before docking, 380,500 head).

The number of sheep and lambs lost to all predators totaled 19,100 head, up 2,100 head from last year. Lamb losses by all predators amounted to 16,400 head, up 18 percent from last year. The number of sheep lost to all predators totaled 2,700 head, down 400 head from a year ago. Predators caused an estimated \$3.57 million in losses in 2020, up 25 percent from the previous year. Losses due to predators amounted to 5 percent of the 2020 sheep and lamb supply and 47.2 percent of all sheep and lamb deaths. Coyotes remained the largest predator for both sheep and lambs. Coyotes accounted for 71.2 percent of the predator caused losses and 33.6 percent of all death losses in the state. The value of losses attributed to coyotes was \$2.52 million.

The total value of non-predatory losses was \$4.20 million in 2020, compared with \$5.00 million in 2019. Non-predatory losses accounted for 52.8 percent of all losses. The largest non-predatory cause of losses was due to weather conditions at 6,300 head. Sheep lost to non-predatory factors totaled 7,300 head, down 8 percent from 2019. Non-predatory lamb losses came in at 14,100 head, 7,000 head less than a year ago.

Lambs lost to all unknown causes totaled 3,800 head, compared with 1,900 head last year. Unknown causes claimed 1,600 sheep, up 400 head from last year.

The sheep and lamb survey utilized multi-frame sampling procedures. The survey involved drawing a random sample from a list of livestock producers maintained by the USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Montana Field Office. In addition, sheep producers living in a selected sample of area segments were interviewed. This procedure assures complete coverage of sheep producers by accounting for ranchers/farmers who may not be on the list.

Sheep and lamb loss estimates published by the USDA include sheep losses for the entire year, but include only those lamb losses that occur after docking. This special report also includes an estimate of lambs lost before docking.

## Losses of Lambs Before Docking, by Cause: Montana, 2015-2020

Cause of Loss	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of Head	Head					
Bear	100	200	100	(D)	100	(D)
Bobcat	(D)	100	100	100	100	(D)
Coyote	3,000	2,800	3,200	2,700	2,100	1,900
Dog	100	100	100	100	200	(D)
Mountain Lion	(D)	100	100	200	(D)	(D)
Foxes	200	400	200	400	200	300
Wolves	100	(D)	500	(D)	(D)	(D)
Eagles	300	400	300	300	500	400
Ravens	100	100	300	(D)	(D)	200
Other/Unknown <sup>1</sup>	500	200	100	100	100	200
<b>Total Predators</b>	<b>4,400</b>	<b>4,400</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>3,900</b>	<b>3,300</b>	<b>3,000</b>
Diseases	1,300	1,800	100	300	(D)	(D)
Enterotoxaemia	100	400	300	300	200	300
Weather Conditions	4,400	3,500	3,600	4,700	11,700	3,200
Lambing Complications	3,200	4,200	4,000	2,000	2,200	3,700
Old Age	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
On Back	(D)	(D)	100	(D)	(D)	(D)
Poison	100	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
Theft	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
Other/Unknown <sup>1</sup>	500	2,700	900	800	600	1,300
<b>Total Non-Predators</b>	<b>9,600</b>	<b>12,600</b>	<b>9,000</b>	<b>8,100</b>	<b>14,700</b>	<b>8,500</b>
<b>Total Losses</b>	<b>14,000</b>	<b>17,000</b>	<b>14,000</b>	<b>12,000</b>	<b>18,000</b>	<b>11,500</b>

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## Losses of Lambs After Docking, by Cause: Montana, 2015-2020

Cause of Loss	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of Head	Head					
Bear	200	500	200	200	1,200	200
Bobcat	100	100	100	400	200	100
Coyote	8,900	7,800	9,200	8,300	7,100	10,100
Dog	100	200	100	200	300	400
Mountain Lion	100	200	200	300	500	100
Foxes	200	300	400	200	400	600
Wolves	100	(D)	200	200	200	200
Eagles	400	400	500	400	400	800
Ravens	(D)	(D)	(D)	100	(D)	(D)
Other/Unknown <sup>1</sup>	400	300	100	400	300	900
<b>Total Predators</b>	<b>10,500</b>	<b>9,800</b>	<b>11,000</b>	<b>10,700</b>	<b>10,600</b>	<b>13,400</b>
Diseases	400	1,200	100	200	100	100
Enterotoxaemia	500	1,100	600	500	700	500
Weather Conditions	1,900	1,800	2,300	4,100	4,200	2,400
Lambing Complications	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Old Age	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
On Back	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
Poison	200	200	700	400	500	200
Theft	1,500	(D)	100	(D)	(D)	1,000
Other/Unknown <sup>1</sup>	1,000	1,900	1,200	1,100	900	1,400
<b>Total Non-Predators</b>	<b>5,500</b>	<b>6,200</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>6,300</b>	<b>6,400</b>	<b>5,600</b>
<b>Total Losses</b>	<b>16,000</b>	<b>16,000</b>	<b>16,000</b>	<b>17,000</b>	<b>17,000</b>	<b>19,000</b>

(D) indicates Un-published: i.e. less than 100 head.

<sup>1</sup> Other/Unknown includes Other and Unknown causes combined with Un-published causes.

Totals may not add due to rounding.

## Losses of Sheep and Lambs Combined, by Cause: Montana, 2015-2020 <sup>1</sup>

Cause of Loss	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Number of Head</b>	<b>Head</b>					
Bear	500	1,000	700	500	1,900	500
Bobcat	100	200	200	600	300	100
Coyote	14,200	12,300	15,400	13,400	10,600	13,600
Dog	200	500	300	400	700	500
Mountain Lion	300	500	600	700	800	300
Foxes	400	700	600	600	600	1,000
Wolves	200	(D)	900	200	300	400
Eagles	700	800	800	700	1,100	1,200
Ravens	100	100	300	200	200	200
Other/Unknown <sup>2</sup>	1,000	700	200	700	500	1,300
<b>Total Predators</b>	<b>17,700</b>	<b>16,800</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>18,000</b>	<b>17,000</b>	<b>19,100</b>
Diseases	2,400	4,000	1,100	1,300	600	700
Enterotoxaemia	900	2,100	1,100	900	900	900
Weather Conditions	6,900	6,200	6,300	10,900	19,100	6,300
Lambing Complications	3,900	4,800	5,500	3,200	2,700	4,400
Old Age	2,400	2,400	1,500	2,000	1,800	3,000
On Back	400	200	700	300	300	200
Poison	500	600	1,000	600	800	600
Theft	3,200	100	100	(D)	200	1,200
Other/Unknown <sup>2</sup>	2,700	6,800	3,700	2,800	2,600	4,100
<b>Total Non-Predators</b>	<b>23,300</b>	<b>27,200</b>	<b>21,000</b>	<b>22,000</b>	<b>29,000</b>	<b>21,400</b>
<b>Total Losses</b>	<b>41,000</b>	<b>44,000</b>	<b>41,000</b>	<b>40,000</b>	<b>46,000</b>	<b>40,500</b>
<b>Percent of Total by Cause</b>	<b>Percent</b>					
Bear	1.2	2.3	1.7	1.3	4.1	1.2
Bobcat	0.2	0.5	0.5	1.5	0.7	0.2
Coyote	34.6	28.0	37.6	33.5	23.0	33.6
Dog	0.5	1.1	0.7	1.0	1.5	1.2
Mountain Lion	0.7	1.1	1.5	1.8	1.7	0.7
Foxes	1.0	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.3	2.5
Wolves	0.5	(D)	2.2	0.5	0.7	1.0
Eagles	1.7	1.8	2.0	1.8	2.4	3.0
Ravens	0.2	0.2	0.7	0.5	0.4	0.5
Other/ Unknown <sup>2</sup>	2.4	1.6	0.5	1.8	1.1	3.2
<b>Total Predators</b>	<b>43.2</b>	<b>38.2</b>	<b>48.8</b>	<b>45.0</b>	<b>37.0</b>	<b>47.2</b>
Diseases	5.9	9.1	2.7	3.3	1.3	1.7
Enterotoxaemia	2.2	4.8	2.7	2.3	2.0	2.2
Weather Conditions	16.8	14.1	15.4	27.3	41.5	15.6
Lambing Complications	9.5	10.9	13.4	8.0	5.9	10.9
Old Age	5.9	5.5	3.7	5.0	3.9	7.4
On Back	1.0	0.5	1.7	0.8	0.7	0.5
Poison	1.2	1.4	2.4	1.5	1.7	1.5
Theft	7.8	0.2	0.2	(D)	0.4	3.0
Other/Unknown <sup>2</sup>	6.6	15.5	9.0	7.0	5.7	10.1
<b>Total Non-Predators</b>	<b>56.8</b>	<b>61.8</b>	<b>51.2</b>	<b>55.0</b>	<b>63.0</b>	<b>52.8</b>
<b>Total Losses</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Total Loss as a Percent of Supply <sup>3</sup></b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>10.6</b>
<b>Dollar Value of Losses by Cause</b>	<b>1,000 dollars</b>					
Bear	93	180	127	92	332	104
Bobcat	18	33	30	96	47	18
Coyote	2,576	2,123	2,475	2,142	1,747	2,524
Dog	36	93	51	66	121	95
Mountain Lion	58	93	107	116	143	64
Foxes	71	116	90	90	95	185
Wolves	36	(D)	146	30	53	82
Eagles	125	133	120	105	184	216
Ravens	18	17	45	36	43	36
Other/Unknown <sup>2</sup>	180	126	30	116	84	244
<b>Total Predators</b>	<b>3,209</b>	<b>2,914</b>	<b>3,220</b>	<b>2,887</b>	<b>2,848</b>	<b>3,566</b>
Diseases	442	712	215	239	122	155
Enterotoxaemia	167	377	176	141	142	167
Weather Conditions	1,241	1,072	967	1,751	3,184	1,167
Lambing Complications	709	826	908	546	453	825
Old Age	478	514	308	410	383	683
On Back	80	43	138	62	64	46
Poison	93	119	167	101	143	127
Theft	605	21	15	(D)	43	226
Other/Unknown <sup>2</sup>	506	1,234	643	470	470	805
<b>Total Non-Predators</b>	<b>4,320</b>	<b>4,918</b>	<b>3,535</b>	<b>3,718</b>	<b>5,003</b>	<b>4,199</b>
<b>Total Losses</b>	<b>7,529</b>	<b>7,832</b>	<b>6,755</b>	<b>6,605</b>	<b>7,851</b>	<b>7,765</b>

(D) indicates Un-published: i.e. less than 100 head.

<sup>1</sup> Lamb losses include both before and after docking losses.

<sup>2</sup> Other/Unknown includes Other and Unknown causes combined with Un-published causes.

<sup>3</sup> Supply equals beginning January 1<sup>st</sup> inventory plus lamb crop plus before docking lamb death loss.

Totals may not add due to rounding.

## Losses of Sheep, by Cause: Montana, 2015-2020

Cause of Loss	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Number of Head</b>	<b>Head</b>					
Bear	200	300	400	300	600	300
Bobcat	(D)	(D)	(D)	100	(D)	(D)
Coyote	2,300	1,700	3,000	2,400	1,400	1,600
Dog	(D)	200	100	100	200	100
Mountain Lion	200	200	300	200	300	200
Foxes	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	100
Wolves	(D)	(D)	200	(D)	100	200
Eagles	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	200	(D)
Ravens	(D)	(D)	(D)	100	200	(D)
Other/Unknown <sup>1</sup>	100	200	(D)	200	100	200
<b>Total Predators</b>	<b>2,800</b>	<b>2,600</b>	<b>4,000</b>	<b>3,400</b>	<b>3,100</b>	<b>2,700</b>
Diseases	700	1,000	900	800	500	600
Enterotoxaemia	300	600	200	100	(D)	100
Weather Conditions	600	900	400	2,100	3,200	700
Lambing Complications	700	600	1,500	1,200	500	700
Old Age	2,400	2,400	1,500	2,000	1,800	3,000
On Back	400	200	600	300	300	200
Poison	200	400	300	200	300	400
Theft	1,700	100	(D)	(D)	200	200
Other/Unknown <sup>1</sup>	1,200	2,200	1,600	900	1,100	1,400
<b>Total Non-Predators</b>	<b>8,200</b>	<b>8,400</b>	<b>7,000</b>	<b>7,600</b>	<b>7,900</b>	<b>7,300</b>
<b>Total Losses</b>	<b>11,000</b>	<b>11,000</b>	<b>11,000</b>	<b>11,000</b>	<b>11,000</b>	<b>10,000</b>
<b>Percent of Total by Cause</b>	<b>Percent</b>					
Bear	1.8	2.7	3.6	2.7	5.5	3.0
Bobcat	(D)	(D)	(D)	0.9	(D)	(D)
Coyote	20.9	15.5	27.3	21.8	12.7	16.0
Dog	(D)	1.8	0.9	0.9	1.8	1.0
Mountain Lion	1.8	1.8	2.7	1.8	2.7	2.0
Foxes	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	1.0
Wolves	(D)	(D)	1.8	(D)	0.9	2.0
Eagles	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	1.8	(D)
Ravens	(D)	(D)	(D)	0.9	1.8	(D)
Other/Unknown <sup>1</sup>	0.9	1.8	(D)	1.8	0.9	2.0
<b>Total Predators</b>	<b>25.4</b>	<b>23.6</b>	<b>36.4</b>	<b>30.9</b>	<b>28.2</b>	<b>27.0</b>
Diseases	6.4	9.1	8.2	7.3	4.5	6.0
Enterotoxaemia	2.7	5.5	1.8	0.9	(D)	1.0
Weather Conditions	5.5	8.2	3.6	19.1	29.1	7.0
Lambing Complications	6.4	5.5	13.6	10.9	4.5	7.0
Old Age	21.8	21.8	13.6	18.2	16.4	30.0
On Back	3.6	1.8	5.5	2.7	2.7	2.0
Poison	1.8	3.6	2.7	1.8	2.7	4.0
Theft	15.5	0.9	(D)	(D)	1.8	2.0
Other/Unknown <sup>1</sup>	10.9	20.0	14.5	8.2	10.0	14.0
<b>Total Non-Predators</b>	<b>74.5</b>	<b>76.4</b>	<b>63.6</b>	<b>69.1</b>	<b>71.8</b>	<b>73.0</b>
<b>Total Losses</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Dollar Value of Losses by Cause</b>	<b>1,000 dollars</b>					
Bear	40	64	82	62	128	68
Bobcat	(D)	(D)	(D)	21	(D)	(D)
Coyote	458	364	615	492	298	364
Dog	(D)	43	21	21	43	23
Mountain Lion	40	43	62	41	64	46
Foxes	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	23
Wolves	(D)	(D)	41	(D)	21	46
Eagles	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	43	(D)
Ravens	(D)	(D)	(D)	21	43	(D)
Other/Unknown <sup>1</sup>	20	43	(D)	41	21	46
<b>Total Predators</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>556</b>	<b>820</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>659</b>	<b>614</b>
Diseases	139	214	185	164	106	137
Enterotoxaemia	60	128	41	21	(D)	23
Weather Conditions	119	193	82	431	680	159
Lambing Complications	139	128	308	246	106	159
Old Age	478	514	308	410	383	683
On Back	80	43	123	62	64	46
Poison	40	86	62	41	64	91
Theft	338	21	(D)	(D)	43	46
Other/Unknown <sup>1</sup>	239	471	328	185	234	319
<b>Total Non-Predators</b>	<b>1,632</b>	<b>1,798</b>	<b>1,435</b>	<b>1,558</b>	<b>1,679</b>	<b>1,661</b>
<b>Total Losses</b>	<b>2,189</b>	<b>2,354</b>	<b>2,255</b>	<b>2,255</b>	<b>2,338</b>	<b>2,275</b>

(D) indicates Un-published: i.e. less than 100 head.

<sup>1</sup> Other/Unknown includes Other and Unknown causes combined with Un-published causes.

Totals may not add due to rounding.

## Losses of All Lambs, by Cause: Montana, 2015-2020 <sup>1</sup>

Cause of Loss	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Number of Head</b>	<b>Head</b>					
Bear	300	700	300	200	1,300	200
Bobcat	100	200	200	500	300	100
Coyote	11,900	10,600	12,400	11,000	9,200	12,000
Dog	200	300	200	300	500	400
Mountain Lion	100	300	300	500	500	100
Foxes	400	700	600	600	600	900
Wolves	200	(D)	700	200	200	200
Eagles	700	800	800	700	900	1,200
Ravens	100	100	300	100	(D)	200
Other/Unknown <sup>2</sup>	900	500	200	500	400	1,100
<b>Total Predators</b>	<b>14,900</b>	<b>14,200</b>	<b>16,000</b>	<b>14,600</b>	<b>13,900</b>	<b>16,400</b>
Diseases	1,700	3,000	200	500	100	100
Enterotoxaemia	600	1,500	900	800	900	800
Weather Conditions	6,300	5,300	5,900	8,800	15,900	5,600
Lambing Complications	3,200	4,200	4,000	2,000	2,200	3,700
Old Age	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
On Back	(D)	(D)	100	(D)	(D)	(D)
Poison	300	200	700	400	500	200
Theft	1,500	(D)	100	(D)	(D)	1,000
Other/Unknown <sup>2</sup>	1,500	4,600	2,100	1,900	1,500	2,700
<b>Total Non-Predators</b>	<b>15,100</b>	<b>18,800</b>	<b>14,000</b>	<b>14,400</b>	<b>21,100</b>	<b>14,100</b>
<b>Total Losses</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>33,000</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>29,000</b>	<b>35,000</b>	<b>30,500</b>
<b>Percent of Total by Cause</b>	<b>Percent</b>					
Bear	1.0	2.1	1.0	0.7	3.7	0.7
Bobcat	0.3	0.6	0.7	1.7	0.9	0.3
Coyote	39.7	32.1	41.3	37.9	26.3	39.3
Dog	0.7	0.9	0.7	1.0	1.4	1.3
Mountain Lion	0.3	0.9	1.0	1.7	1.4	0.3
Foxes	1.3	2.1	2.0	2.1	1.7	3.0
Wolves	0.7	(D)	2.3	0.7	0.6	0.7
Eagles	2.3	2.4	2.7	2.4	2.6	3.9
Ravens	0.3	0.3	1.0	0.3	(D)	0.7
Other/Unknown <sup>2</sup>	3.0	1.5	0.7	1.7	1.1	3.6
<b>Total Predators</b>	<b>49.7</b>	<b>43.0</b>	<b>53.3</b>	<b>50.3</b>	<b>39.7</b>	<b>53.8</b>
Diseases	5.7	9.1	0.7	1.7	0.3	0.3
Enterotoxaemia	2.0	4.5	3.0	2.8	2.6	2.6
Weather Conditions	21.0	16.1	19.7	30.3	45.4	18.4
Lambing Complications	10.7	12.7	13.3	6.9	6.3	12.1
Old Age	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
On Back	(D)	(D)	0.3	(D)	(D)	(D)
Poison	1.0	0.6	2.3	1.4	1.4	0.7
Theft	5.0	(D)	0.3	(D)	(D)	3.3
Other/Unknown <sup>2</sup>	5.0	13.9	7.0	6.6	4.3	8.9
<b>Total Non-Predators</b>	<b>50.3</b>	<b>57.0</b>	<b>46.7</b>	<b>49.7</b>	<b>60.3</b>	<b>46.2</b>
<b>Total Losses</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Dollar Value of Losses by Cause</b>	<b>1,000 dollars</b>					
Bear	53	116	45	30	205	36
Bobcat	18	33	30	75	47	18
Coyote	2,118	1,760	1,860	1,650	1,449	2,160
Dog	36	50	30	45	79	72
Mountain Lion	18	50	45	75	79	18
Foxes	71	116	90	90	95	162
Wolves	36	(D)	105	30	32	36
Eagles	125	133	120	105	142	216
Ravens	18	17	45	15	(D)	36
Other/Unknown <sup>2</sup>	160	83	30	75	63	198
<b>Total Predators</b>	<b>2,652</b>	<b>2,357</b>	<b>2,400</b>	<b>2,190</b>	<b>2,189</b>	<b>2,952</b>
Diseases	303	498	30	75	16	18
Enterotoxaemia	107	249	135	120	142	144
Weather Conditions	1,121	880	885	1,320	2,504	1,008
Lambing Complications	570	697	600	300	347	666
Old Age	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
On Back	(D)	(D)	15	(D)	(D)	(D)
Poison	53	33	105	60	79	36
Theft	267	(D)	15	(D)	(D)	180
Other/Unknown <sup>2</sup>	267	764	315	285	236	486
<b>Total Non-Predators</b>	<b>2,688</b>	<b>3,121</b>	<b>2,100</b>	<b>2,160</b>	<b>3,323</b>	<b>2,538</b>
<b>Total Losses</b>	<b>5,340</b>	<b>5,478</b>	<b>4,500</b>	<b>4,350</b>	<b>5,512</b>	<b>5,490</b>

(D) indicates Un-published: i.e. less than 100 head.

<sup>1</sup> Lamb losses include both before and after docking losses.

<sup>2</sup> Other/Unknown includes Other and Unknown causes combined with Un-published causes.

Totals may not add due to rounding.