



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE
MONTANA FIELD OFFICE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MONTANA SHEEP & LAMB LOSSES – 2018

Montana sheep and lamb producers lost 40,000 animals to weather, predators, disease and other causes during 2018, representing a total value of \$6.61 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 1,000 head less than last year, and the total value of inventory lost was 2 percent less than a year ago. The January 1, 2018 inventory was 225,000 head. The lamb crop for 2018 was 180,000 head. Lambs lost before docking during 2018 was 12,000 head. Sheep and lamb deaths for 2018 amounted to 9.6 percent of the 2018 sheep and lamb supply (inventory plus lamb crop plus lambs lost before docking, 417,000 head).

The number of sheep and lambs lost to all predators totaled 18,000 head, down 2,000 head from last year. Lamb losses by all predators amounted to 14,600 head, down 9 percent from last year. The number of sheep lost to all predators totaled 3,400 head, down 600 head from a year ago. Predators caused an estimated \$2.89 million in losses in 2018, down 10 percent from the previous year. Losses due to predators amounted to 4.3 percent of the 2018 sheep and lamb supply and 45 percent of all sheep and lamb deaths. Coyotes remained the largest predator for both sheep and lambs. Coyotes accounted for 74 percent of the predator caused losses and 34 percent of all death losses in the state. The value of losses attributed to coyotes was \$2.14 million.

The total value of non-predatory losses was \$3.72 million in 2018, compared with \$3.54 million in 2017. Non-predatory losses accounted for 55 percent of all losses. The largest non-predatory cause of losses was due to weather conditions at 10,900 head. Sheep lost to non-predatory factors totaled 7,600 head, up 9 percent from 2017. Non-predatory lamb losses came in at 14,400 head, 400 head more than a year ago.

Lambs lost to all unknown causes totaled 2,400 head, compared with 2,300 head last year. Unknown causes claimed 1,100 sheep, down 500 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, 2013-2018

Cause of Loss	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of Head	Head					
Bear	200	(D)	100	200	100	(D)
Bobcat	(D)	(D)	(D)	100	100	100
Coyote	2,700	2,600	3,000	2,800	3,200	2,700
Dog	100	100	100	100	100	100
Mountain Lion	(D)	(D)	(D)	100	100	200
Foxes	300	100	200	400	200	400
Wolves	(D)	100	100	(D)	500	(D)
Eagles	300	300	300	400	300	300
Ravens	(D)	(D)	100	100	300	(D)
Other/Unknown ¹	300	500	500	200	100	100
Total Predators	3,900	3,700	4,400	4,400	5,000	3,900
Diseases	1,200	1,100	1,300	1,800	100	300
Enterotoxaemia	600	100	100	400	300	300
Weather Conditions	2,500	3,900	4,400	3,500	3,600	4,700
Lambing Complications	3,600	2,800	3,200	4,200	4,000	2,000
Old Age	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
On Back	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	100	(D)
Poison	100	100	100	(D)	(D)	(D)
Theft	100	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
Other/Unknown ¹	1,000	300	500	2,700	900	800
Total Non-Predators	9,100	8,300	9,600	12,600	9,000	8,100
Total Losses	13,000	12,000	14,000	17,000	14,000	12,000

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Losses of Lambs After Docking, by Cause: Montana, 2013-2018

Cause of Loss	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of Head	Head					
Bear	300	100	200	500	200	200
Bobcat	100	100	100	100	100	400
Coyote	7,900	8,100	8,900	7,800	9,200	8,300
Dog	100	100	100	200	100	200
Mountain Lion	100	100	100	200	200	300
Foxes	300	200	200	300	400	200
Wolves	(D)	100	100	(D)	200	200
Eagles	300	400	400	400	500	400
Ravens	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	100
Other/Unknown ¹	300	500	400	300	100	400
Total Predators	9,400	9,700	10,500	9,800	11,000	10,700
Diseases	1,000	400	400	1,200	100	200
Enterotoxaemia	700	500	500	1,100	600	500
Weather Conditions	3,100	1,700	1,900	1,800	2,300	4,100
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	100	200	200	700	400
Theft	100	1,400	1,500	(D)	100	(D)
Other/Unknown ¹	1,500	1,200	1,000	1,900	1,200	1,100
Total Non-Predators	6,600	5,300	5,500	6,200	5,000	6,300
Total Losses	16,000	15,000	16,000	16,000	16,000	17,000

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

¹ 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, 2013-2018 ¹

Cause of Loss	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of Head	Head					
Bear	800	300	500	1,000	700	500
Bobcat	100	100	100	200	200	600
Coyote	12,800	13,200	14,200	12,300	15,400	13,400
Dog	300	300	200	500	300	400
Mountain Lion	200	300	300	500	600	700
Foxes	600	300	400	700	600	600
Wolves	(D)	200	200	(D)	900	200
Eagles	700	700	700	800	800	700
Ravens	(D)	(D)	100	100	300	200
Other/Unknown ²	700	1,000	1,000	700	200	700
Total Predators	16,200	16,400	17,700	16,800	20,000	18,000
Diseases	2,900	2,300	2,400	4,000	1,100	1,300
Enterotoxaemia	2,000	900	900	2,100	1,100	900
Weather Conditions	6,100	6,300	6,900	6,200	6,300	10,900
Lambing Complications	4,400	3,600	3,900	4,800	5,500	3,200
Old Age	2,900	2,600	2,400	2,400	1,500	2,000
On Back	300	400	400	200	700	300
Poison	600	400	500	600	1,000	600
Theft	300	3,300	3,200	100	100	(D)
Other/Unknown ²	4,300	2,800	2,700	6,800	3,700	2,800
Total Non-Predators	23,800	22,600	23,300	27,200	21,000	22,000
Total Losses	40,000	39,000	41,000	44,000	41,000	40,000
Percent of Total by Cause	Percent					
Bear	2.0	0.8	1.2	2.3	1.7	1.3
Bobcat	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.5	1.5
Coyote	32.0	33.8	34.6	28.0	37.6	33.5
Dog	0.8	0.8	0.5	1.1	0.7	1.0
Mountain Lion	0.5	0.8	0.7	1.1	1.5	1.8
Foxes	1.5	0.8	1.0	1.6	1.5	1.5
Wolves	(D)	0.5	0.5	(D)	2.2	0.5
Eagles	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.8	2.0	1.8
Ravens	(D)	(D)	0.2	0.2	0.7	0.5
Other/ Unknown ²	1.8	2.6	2.4	1.6	0.5	1.8
Total Predators	40.5	42.1	43.2	38.2	48.8	45.0
Diseases	7.3	5.9	5.9	9.1	2.7	3.3
Enterotoxaemia	5.0	2.3	2.2	4.8	2.7	2.3
Weather Conditions	15.3	16.2	16.8	14.1	15.4	27.3
Lambing Complications	11.0	9.2	9.5	10.9	13.4	8.0
Old Age	7.3	6.7	5.9	5.5	3.7	5.0
On Back	0.8	1.0	1.0	0.5	1.7	0.8
Poison	1.5	1.0	1.2	1.4	2.4	1.5
Theft	0.8	8.5	7.8	0.2	0.2	(D)
Other/Unknown ²	10.8	7.2	6.6	15.5	9.0	7.0
Total Non-Predators	59.5	57.9	56.8	61.8	51.2	55.0
Total Losses	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Loss as a Percent of Supply ³	8.9	9.0	9.8	10.1	9.4	9.6
Dollar Value of Losses by Cause	1,000 dollars					
Bear	142	59	93	180	127	92
Bobcat	18	18	18	33	30	96
Coyote	2,251	2,434	2,576	2,123	2,475	2,142
Dog	53	57	36	93	51	66
Mountain Lion	36	59	58	93	107	116
Foxes	105	54	71	116	90	90
Wolves	(D)	36	36	(D)	146	30
Eagles	123	125	125	133	120	105
Ravens	(D)	(D)	18	17	45	36
Other/Unknown ²	123	179	180	126	30	116
Total Predators	2,850	3,021	3,209	2,914	3,220	2,887
Diseases	511	435	442	712	215	239
Enterotoxaemia	354	170	167	377	176	141
Weather Conditions	1,070	1,148	1,241	1,072	967	1,751
Lambing Complications	774	667	709	826	908	546
Old Age	522	540	478	514	308	410
On Back	54	83	80	43	138	62
Poison	107	77	93	119	167	101
Theft	53	645	605	21	15	(D)
Other/Unknown ²	762	538	506	1,234	643	470
Total Non-Predators	4,205	4,302	4,320	4,918	3,535	3,718
Total Losses	7,055	7,323	7,529	7,832	6,755	6,605

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

¹ Lamb losses include both before and after docking losses.

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

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

Totals may not add due to rounding.

Losses of Sheep, by Cause: Montana, 2013-2018

Cause of Loss	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of Head	Head					
Bear	300	200	200	300	400	300
Bobcat	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	100
Coyote	2,200	2,500	2,300	1,700	3,000	2,400
Dog	100	100	(D)	200	100	100
Mountain Lion	100	200	200	200	300	200
Foxes	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
Wolves	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	200	(D)
Eagles	100	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
Ravens	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	100
Other/Unknown ¹	100	(D)	100	200	(D)	200
Total Predators	2,900	3,000	2,800	2,600	4,000	3,400
Diseases	700	800	700	1,000	900	800
Enterotoxaemia	700	300	300	600	200	100
Weather Conditions	500	700	600	900	400	2,100
Lambing Complications	800	800	700	600	1,500	1,200
Old Age	2,900	2,600	2,400	2,400	1,500	2,000
On Back	300	400	400	200	600	300
Poison	300	200	200	400	300	200
Theft	100	1,900	1,700	100	(D)	(D)
Other/Unknown ¹	1,800	1,300	1,200	2,200	1,600	900
Total Non-Predators	8,100	9,000	8,200	8,400	7,000	7,600
Total Losses	11,000	12,000	11,000	11,000	11,000	11,000
Percent of Total by Cause	Percent					
Bear	2.7	1.7	1.8	2.7	3.6	2.7
Bobcat	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	0.9
Coyote	20.0	20.8	20.9	15.5	27.3	21.8
Dog	0.9	0.8	(D)	1.8	0.9	0.9
Mountain Lion	0.9	1.7	1.8	1.8	2.7	1.8
Foxes	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
Wolves	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	1.8	(D)
Eagles	0.9	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
Ravens	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	0.9
Other/Unknown ¹	0.9	(D)	0.9	1.8	(D)	1.8
Total Predators	26.4	25.0	25.4	23.6	36.4	30.9
Diseases	6.4	6.7	6.4	9.1	8.2	7.3
Enterotoxaemia	6.4	2.5	2.7	5.5	1.8	0.9
Weather Conditions	4.5	5.8	5.5	8.2	3.6	19.1
Lambing Complications	7.3	6.7	6.4	5.5	13.6	10.9
Old Age	26.4	21.7	21.8	21.8	13.6	18.2
On Back	2.7	3.3	3.6	1.8	5.5	2.7
Poison	2.7	1.7	1.8	3.6	2.7	1.8
Theft	0.9	15.8	15.5	0.9	(D)	(D)
Other/Unknown ¹	16.4	10.8	10.9	20.0	14.5	8.2
Total Non-Predators	73.6	75.0	74.5	76.4	63.6	69.1
Total Losses	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Dollar Value of Losses by Cause	1,000 dollars					
Bear	54	42	40	64	82	62
Bobcat	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	21
Coyote	396	519	458	364	615	492
Dog	18	21	(D)	43	21	21
Mountain Lion	18	42	40	43	62	41
Foxes	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
Wolves	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	41	(D)
Eagles	18	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
Ravens	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	21
Other/Unknown ¹	18	(D)	20	43	(D)	41
Total Predators	522	623	557	556	820	697
Diseases	126	166	139	214	185	164
Enterotoxaemia	126	62	60	128	41	21
Weather Conditions	90	145	119	193	82	431
Lambing Complications	144	166	139	128	308	246
Old Age	522	540	478	514	308	410
On Back	54	83	80	43	123	62
Poison	54	42	40	86	62	41
Theft	18	394	338	21	(D)	(D)
Other/Unknown ¹	324	270	239	471	328	185
Total Non-Predators	1,458	1,868	1,632	1,798	1,435	1,558
Total Losses	1,980	2,490	2,189	2,354	2,255	2,255

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

¹ 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, 2013-2018 ¹

Cause of Loss	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of Head	Head					
Bear	500	100	300	700	300	200
Bobcat	100	100	100	200	200	500
Coyote	10,600	10,700	11,900	10,600	12,400	11,000
Dog	200	200	200	300	200	300
Mountain Lion	100	100	100	300	300	500
Foxes	600	300	400	700	600	600
Wolves	(D)	200	200	(D)	700	200
Eagles	600	700	700	800	800	700
Ravens	(D)	(D)	100	100	300	100
Other/Unknown ²	600	1,000	900	500	200	500
Total Predators	13,300	13,400	14,900	14,200	16,000	14,600
Diseases	2,200	1,500	1,700	3,000	200	500
Enterotoxaemia	1,300	600	600	1,500	900	800
Weather Conditions	5,600	5,600	6,300	5,300	5,900	8,800
Lambing Complications	3,600	2,800	3,200	4,200	4,000	2,000
Old Age	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
On Back	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	100	(D)
Poison	300	200	300	200	700	400
Theft	200	1,400	1,500	(D)	100	(D)
Other/Unknown ²	2,500	1,500	1,500	4,600	2,100	1,900
Total Non-Predators	15,700	13,600	15,100	18,800	14,000	14,400
Total Losses	29,000	27,000	30,000	33,000	30,000	29,000
Percent of Total by Cause	Percent					
Bear	1.7	0.4	1.0	2.1	1.0	0.7
Bobcat	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.7	1.7
Coyote	36.6	39.6	39.7	32.1	41.3	37.9
Dog	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.9	0.7	1.0
Mountain Lion	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.9	1.0	1.7
Foxes	2.1	1.1	1.3	2.1	2.0	2.1
Wolves	(D)	0.7	0.7	(D)	2.3	0.7
Eagles	2.1	2.6	2.3	2.4	2.7	2.4
Ravens	(D)	(D)	0.3	0.3	1.0	0.3
Other/Unknown ²	2.1	3.7	3.0	1.5	0.7	1.7
Total Predators	45.9	49.6	49.7	43.0	53.3	50.3
Diseases	7.6	5.6	5.7	9.1	0.7	1.7
Enterotoxaemia	4.5	2.2	2.0	4.5	3.0	2.8
Weather Conditions	19.3	20.7	21.0	16.1	19.7	30.3
Lambing Complications	12.4	10.4	10.7	12.7	13.3	6.9
Old Age	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
On Back	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	0.3	(D)
Poison	1.0	0.7	1.0	0.6	2.3	1.4
Theft	0.7	5.2	5.0	(D)	0.3	(D)
Other/Unknown ²	8.6	5.6	5.0	13.9	7.0	6.6
Total Non-Predators	54.1	50.4	50.3	57.0	46.7	49.7
Total Losses	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Dollar Value of Losses by Cause	1,000 dollars					
Bear	88	18	53	116	45	30
Bobcat	18	18	18	33	30	75
Coyote	1,855	1,915	2,118	1,760	1,860	1,650
Dog	35	36	36	50	30	45
Mountain Lion	18	18	18	50	45	75
Foxes	105	54	71	116	90	90
Wolves	(D)	36	36	(D)	105	30
Eagles	105	125	125	133	120	105
Ravens	(D)	(D)	18	17	45	15
Other/Unknown ²	105	179	160	83	30	75
Total Predators	2,328	2,399	2,652	2,357	2,400	2,190
Diseases	385	269	303	498	30	75
Enterotoxaemia	228	107	107	249	135	120
Weather Conditions	980	1,002	1,121	880	885	1,320
Lambing Complications	630	501	570	697	600	300
Old Age	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
On Back	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	15	(D)
Poison	53	36	53	33	105	60
Theft	35	251	267	(D)	15	(D)
Other/Unknown ²	438	269	267	764	315	285
Total Non-Predators	2,748	2,434	2,688	3,121	2,100	2,160
Total Losses	5,075	4,833	5,340	5,478	4,500	4,350

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

¹ Lamb losses include both before and after docking losses.

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

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