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## **A2.31 Predation Management**

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*Effective: 01/16/2015*

*Policy Process Owner: Game Branch Chief*

**Policy:** The Arizona Game and Fish Commission (Commission) recognizes the roles predators and predation play within Arizona's ecosystems. The Commission also recognizes predation management as a valuable, science-based, and legitimate wildlife management tool that can influence populations of species that are preyed on or compete with species that prey on others. In addition, the Commission is aware of the diverse public opinions concerning predation issues and recognizes the need to increase public education to facilitate a better understanding of predation management, including the effects of not managing predation.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department (Department) will make management decisions that influence predation based on the best available scientific information. The Department will manage species that prey on other wildlife species to provide adequate populations for ecological, scientific, educational, and recreational purposes, to reduce conflicts with humans, and to reduce adverse effects on other wildlife populations.

**Purpose:** This policy establishes guidelines for implementing area-specific predation management using sound biological practices. Although the policy primarily addresses mountain lion and coyote management, it is applicable to any predatory species, including species legally classified as big game such as bears, or any other species regardless of legal classification, that prey on another species.

This policy does not supersede or replace existing livestock depredation procedures or the Department's normal hunt recommendation process. Threats to human health and safety will be handled in accordance with the Department's wildlife-human interaction policies.

The Department will develop and implement area-specific management plans for predation management when the Department determines that predation is preventing the Department from meeting its management goals and objectives for other wildlife species. Scientific studies have demonstrated that actions to remove predators across broad landscapes have proven unsuccessful, but actions within a focused area (i.e., <250 mi<sup>2</sup>) can be effective. Area-specific actions address the local issues which limit prey and define implementation of realistic and effective predation management activities.

**Implementation:** The Department will develop and implement area-specific management plans that include:

1. Statement of need indicating;
  - a. Specific areas where the Department has or plans to translocate bighorn sheep, pronghorn antelope, special status species, or any other species the Department determines is vulnerable to predation; or
  - b. Areas where existing wildlife populations are below the Department's management objectives and the Department reasonably concludes that predation may limit specific populations of wildlife that inhabit that area.



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2. Description of area;
  3. Management goals;
  4. Measurable objectives;
  5. Strategies and management actions;
  6. Intensity and duration of the action, which should be sufficient to achieve management goals;
  7. Environmental assessment checklist; and
  8. Public outreach plan.

In area-specific management plans, the Department should evaluate the feasibility of using lethal or non-lethal methods of predation management. When the Department determines lethal removal is appropriate, in no specific order of priority, the following methods should be considered:

1. Licensed and permitted hunters or trappers may take species that prey on another species during established seasons. Commission rules and regulations may be modified as authorized by the Commission.
2. The Department may designate individuals who may take species that prey on another species in specific areas.
3. Department personnel may take species that prey on another species in specific areas.
4. The Department may also promote habitat management activities on public and private lands that may limit effects of predation, but habitat management is not a pre-condition to taking predation management actions.

Area-specific management plans will be developed under the direction of the appropriate Regional Supervisor and reviewed by the Game, Information, and Habitat Branch Chiefs. These plans cannot be implemented without prior approval of the Assistant Directors for the Field Operations Division and the Wildlife Management Division. The Department will initiate actions after approval of an area-specific management plan.

### **Aerial Coyote Take Process**

In accordance with provisions of A.R.S. § 28-8281, the Department and U.S. government agencies (agency) that have the authority to take wildlife are authorized to use aircraft for taking coyotes.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department Director, or the Director's designee, must approve the aerial take of coyotes to benefit wildlife or livestock before an agency may use aircraft for taking coyotes. An agency can request permission to take coyotes using aircraft by submitting an Aerial Coyote Control Application Form #3041 to the Director.

When immediate control is required, the Director may approve the request by telephone. The agency shall submit a properly completed Form #3041 to the Department immediately thereafter.

The agency shall submit a report of aerial control activities conducted under the provisions of this policy using the Aerial Coyote Control Report Form #3042 to the Department within 30 days after expiration of the permit.