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HOW IMPORTANT ARE LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT METHODS TO THE
PREVENTION AND/OR REDUCTION OF LOSSES TO COYOTES

Summary of Panel

by

Don Good^{1/}

Professor E. K. Faulkner, Extension Sheep Specialist from the University of Wyoming, stated that fencing the range was too expensive to be practical. He indicated that flares, pop-guns, color painting on sheep, and dogs have been used to cut down losses to coyotes but these methods have not been nearly so effective as the use of cyanide guns and 1080. He also indicated that losses to coyotes along with labor problems are the number 1 and 2 reasons for 200 sheepmen going out of the business the past 5 years in the range country. He said that shed lambing or lambing in confinement would cut losses to predators but this involved a large investment in buildings which would be questionable from the standpoint of economics handling large bands of ewes from 3,000 to 5,000 head. Professor Faulkner indicated that when the food supply for coyotes becomes short and they get hungry, they will kill and eat.

Dr. Robert Hyde, Extension Specialist in Range Management at Colorado State University indicated that fencing was effective in cutting coyote damage to flocks but it was expensive. He indicated that the coyote population has been increasing at a rapid rate in Colorado and with the decrease in sheep numbers, the coyotes have turned to cattle. The main losses in cattle were in the calving season when the cow was in the process of calving or the calf was extremely young and was not able to protect itself at that age. He also indicated that losses to coyotes were higher from first-calf heifers which were not as protective of their offspring as older cows. He indicated that trappers were a help in reducing coyote population and, also, certain areas have given some sheep producers relief but the cost of trappers and the availability of experienced trappers was a problem. He also indicated that when the reduced natural food supply for coyotes occurred, they had turned to cattle in the State of Colorado. He pointed out that coyotes travel great distances in search of food and that the rotation of pastures or areas was not practical from the standpoint of the rancher indicating that the cost involved in transporting livestock to another range, even though it would be effective in helping to control predator losses, is not economically feasible.

Dr. Keith Zoellner, Extension Beef Cattle Specialist at Kansas State University, brought out the possibility of the use of hormones at calving time to bring on forced labor and decrease the calving time interval and increase management and labor during this period which should help to prevent predator losses. The cowherd can then be kept in confinement for a shorter period of time and when the calves are on the ground and going in good shape, they are less likely to be attacked by the coyotes.

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Professor Marion E. Jackson, Extension Economist of Dairy and Poultry Science at Kansas State University, indicated that the poultry industry has moved almost totally to confinement production, therefore, the coyote and dog problem as far as the losses in the poultry industry is concerned, is not significant. He did indicate that poultry was a prime prey for the predator if they are not in confinement. Most of the farmers and ranchers throughout the country have discontinued their farm flock operations and the industry is pretty much a large commercial confinement program.

Dr. George Ahlschwede, State Sheep Extension Specialist at Kansas State University, indicated that dogs were to blame for many of the losses in the Kansas sheep industry and pointed out that dogs and coyotes were the number one problem as far as the Kansas sheep producers are concerned. He pointed out that electric fence has been used effectively in some parts of the state to control predators but was quick to point to research in handling sheep under total confinement. Dr. Ahlschwede feels that the sheep industry will be moving more in this direction in the future where the ewes will lamb in confinement and the lambs will be finished for market in confinement. If this occurs in the sheep industry, it would eliminate the predator problem for those that are managing their sheep under confinement programs.

Considerable discussion occurred after the presentations by the panel members and it was brought out that farmers and ranchers, the Cooperative Extension Service, the Wildlife Management people, and the state and federal agencies will need to work together in order to come up with effective predator control programs which will serve the livestock industry, consuming public and regulate wildlife population in a desirable manner. Considerable discussion took place concerning what losses could be taken by the producer and it was pointed out that the margin of profit is so low that anything beyond a 3 to 5% loss to predators would be prohibitive.

With the energy crisis confronting our nation, it seems to me that we will be turning to wool as a source of fiber for manufacturing our clothing in the future since it requires a great deal of energy to manufacture synthetic fibers for clothing manufacture. Wool is a very desirable natural fiber and the demand for this natural fiber in the future, will increase at a rapid rate. This means that the sheep industry will need to be increased in order to supply the demand for wool which is on the horizon. It will take cooperation by all concerned to effectively use the sheep in producing food and fiber for the consumer's market; sound, practical approaches for predator control will have to be implemented in order to accomplish an efficient, effective production of wool and lamb for our consumers and at the same time not endanger the extermination of the coyote.