

# Testimony heard on wolf debate

## Five bills would help protect ranchers from livestock loss

About the only consensus among those who testified at a hearing on five wolf management bills on Wednesday was that ranchers should be compensated for livestock losses.

The five bills backed by the Oregon Cattlemen's Association would roll back statewide population goals for wolves, liberalize the allowed taking of wolves and establish a compensation plan for losses. About 35 people showed up during the almost two-hour hearing in front of members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources.

A second session to take public testimony is scheduled at 5 p.m. Tuesday in front of the committee. Ranchers said they need them, citing livestock losses and threats to safety.

Karl Patton, a rancher in Joseph in the northeastern Oregon, recounted a close encounter last March when he went out to investigate his barking stock dogs and bellowing cattle.

"I encountered at least six wolves in my cow-calf pasture," he said, adding that the wolves charged him and his dog. "When they were 30 to 40 yards away, I fired warning shots," that drove them off.

The wolves were coming hard, "and they weren't coming to shake hands," he said.

In May, Patton said he lost two pregnant cows, one with twins, "an incident where wolves took the lives of five animals."

Wolves are changing the behavior of their livestock, and the the members of her family, said Ramona Phillips, also of Joseph.

"Now we live the stress of wolf attacks 24/7," she said.

Their neighbor, Scott Shear of Joseph, said that he has had wolves within 200 yards of his house, and had chased them off his property several times.

The bills' opponents said that the state should stick to the requirements for both wolf numbers and constraints on take in the state's Wolf Management Plan.

"The vast majority of Oregonians are proud of this compromise plan and the process that was used to create it, and it is important that state legislators defend it," said Randy Comeleo of Corvallis.

Rob Klavins, the wildlands advocate for Oregon Wild, said the return of wolves to Oregon "has the potential to be one of our greatest conservation success stories."

"Wolves are not a serious threat to human safety, the livestock industry, or (native wildlife)," he said.

Several legislators on the committee had differing views.

"What I hear here is what is called the urban/rural divide," Rep. Mark Johnson, R-Hood River, said about the two sides.

Rep. Mike Schaufler, D-Happy Valley, told the cattlemen, "I think you folks should have veto power over bike lanes and Max lines ..." in Portland.



**Bill Hoyt (left) and Rod Childers of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association provide testimony Wednesday at a House Committee hearing regarding wolves' effect on their livelihood. / Thomas Patterson | Statesman Journal**