



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE
MONTANA FIELD OFFICE
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MONTANA SHEEP & LAMB LOSSES – 2019

Montana sheep and lamb producers lost 46,000 animals to weather, predators, disease and other causes during 2019, representing a total value of \$7.85 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 6,000 head more than last year, and the total value of inventory lost was 19 percent more than a year ago. The January 1, 2019 inventory was 215,000 head. The lamb crop for 2019 was 172,000 head. Lambs lost before docking during 2019 was 18,000 head. Sheep and lamb deaths for 2019 amounted to 11.4 percent of the 2019 sheep and lamb supply (inventory plus lamb crop plus lambs lost before docking, 405,000 head).

The number of sheep and lambs lost to all predators totaled 17,000 head, down 1,000 head from last year. Lamb losses by all predators amounted to 13,900 head, down 5 percent from last year. The number of sheep lost to all predators totaled 3,100 head, down 300 head from a year ago. Predators caused an estimated \$2.85 million in losses in 2019, down 1 percent from the previous year. Losses due to predators amounted to 4.2 percent of the 2019 sheep and lamb supply and 37.0 percent of all sheep and lamb deaths. Coyotes remained the largest predator for both sheep and lambs. Coyotes accounted for 62.4 percent of the predator caused losses and 23.0 percent of all death losses in the state. The value of losses attributed to coyotes was \$1.75 million.

The total value of non-predatory losses was \$5.00 million in 2019, compared with \$3.72 million in 2018. Non-predatory losses accounted for 63.0 percent of all losses. The largest non-predatory cause of losses was due to weather conditions at 19,100 head. Sheep lost to non-predatory factors totaled 7,900 head, up 4 percent from 2018. Non-predatory lamb losses came in at 21,100 head, 6,700 head more than a year ago.

Lambs lost to all unknown causes totaled 1,900 head, compared with 2,400 head last year. Unknown causes claimed 1,200 sheep, up 100 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, 2014-2019

Cause of Loss	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of Head	Head					
Bear	(D)	100	200	100	(D)	100
Bobcat	(D)	(D)	100	100	100	100
Coyote	2,600	3,000	2,800	3,200	2,700	2,100
Dog	100	100	100	100	100	200
Mountain Lion	(D)	(D)	100	100	200	(D)
Foxes	100	200	400	200	400	200
Wolves	100	100	(D)	500	(D)	(D)
Eagles	300	300	400	300	300	500
Ravens	(D)	100	100	300	(D)	(D)
Other/Unknown ¹	500	500	200	100	100	100
Total Predators	3,700	4,400	4,400	5,000	3,900	3,300
Diseases	1,100	1,300	1,800	100	300	(D)
Enterotoxaemia	100	100	400	300	300	200
Weather Conditions	3,900	4,400	3,500	3,600	4,700	11,700
Lambing Complications	2,800	3,200	4,200	4,000	2,000	2,200
Old Age	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
On Back	(D)	(D)	(D)	100	(D)	(D)
Poison	100	100	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
Theft	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
Other/Unknown ¹	300	500	2,700	900	800	600
Total Non-Predators	8,300	9,600	12,600	9,000	8,100	14,700
Total Losses	12,000	14,000	17,000	14,000	12,000	18,000

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Losses of Lambs After Docking, by Cause: Montana, 2014-2019

Cause of Loss	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of Head	Head					
Bear	100	200	500	200	200	1,200
Bobcat	100	100	100	100	400	200
Coyote	8,100	8,900	7,800	9,200	8,300	7,100
Dog	100	100	200	100	200	300
Mountain Lion	100	100	200	200	300	500
Foxes	200	200	300	400	200	400
Wolves	100	100	(D)	200	200	200
Eagles	400	400	400	500	400	400
Ravens	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	100	(D)
Other/Unknown ¹	500	400	300	100	400	300
Total Predators	9,700	10,500	9,800	11,000	10,700	10,600
Diseases	400	400	1,200	100	200	100
Enterotoxaemia	500	500	1,100	600	500	700
Weather Conditions	1,700	1,900	1,800	2,300	4,100	4,200
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	100	200	200	700	400	500
Theft	1,400	1,500	(D)	100	(D)	(D)
Other/Unknown ¹	1,200	1,000	1,900	1,200	1,100	900
Total Non-Predators	5,300	5,500	6,200	5,000	6,300	6,400
Total Losses	15,000	16,000	16,000	16,000	17,000	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, 2014-2019 ¹

Cause of Loss	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of Head	Head					
Bear	300	500	1,000	700	500	1,900
Bobcat	100	100	200	200	600	300
Coyote	13,200	14,200	12,300	15,400	13,400	10,600
Dog	300	200	500	300	400	700
Mountain Lion	300	300	500	600	700	800
Foxes	300	400	700	600	600	600
Wolves	200	200	(D)	900	200	300
Eagles	700	700	800	800	700	1,100
Ravens	(D)	100	100	300	200	200
Other/Unknown ²	1,000	1,000	700	200	700	500
Total Predators	16,400	17,700	16,800	20,000	18,000	17,000
Diseases	2,300	2,400	4,000	1,100	1,300	600
Enterotoxaemia	900	900	2,100	1,100	900	900
Weather Conditions	6,300	6,900	6,200	6,300	10,900	19,100
Lambing Complications	3,600	3,900	4,800	5,500	3,200	2,700
Old Age	2,600	2,400	2,400	1,500	2,000	1,800
On Back	400	400	200	700	300	300
Poison	400	500	600	1,000	600	800
Theft	3,300	3,200	100	100	(D)	200
Other/Unknown ²	2,800	2,700	6,800	3,700	2,800	2,600
Total Non-Predators	22,600	23,300	27,200	21,000	22,000	29,000
Total Losses	39,000	41,000	44,000	41,000	40,000	46,000
Percent of Total by Cause	Percent					
Bear	0.8	1.2	2.3	1.7	1.3	4.1
Bobcat	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.5	1.5	0.7
Coyote	33.8	34.6	28.0	37.6	33.5	23.0
Dog	0.8	0.5	1.1	0.7	1.0	1.5
Mountain Lion	0.8	0.7	1.1	1.5	1.8	1.7
Foxes	0.8	1.0	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.3
Wolves	0.5	0.5	(D)	2.2	0.5	0.7
Eagles	1.8	1.7	1.8	2.0	1.8	2.4
Ravens	(D)	0.2	0.2	0.7	0.5	0.4
Other/ Unknown ²	2.6	2.4	1.6	0.5	1.8	1.1
Total Predators	42.1	43.2	38.2	48.8	45.0	37.0
Diseases	5.9	5.9	9.1	2.7	3.3	1.3
Enterotoxaemia	2.3	2.2	4.8	2.7	2.3	2.0
Weather Conditions	16.2	16.8	14.1	15.4	27.3	41.5
Lambing Complications	9.2	9.5	10.9	13.4	8.0	5.9
Old Age	6.7	5.9	5.5	3.7	5.0	3.9
On Back	1.0	1.0	0.5	1.7	0.8	0.7
Poison	1.0	1.2	1.4	2.4	1.5	1.7
Theft	8.5	7.8	0.2	0.2	(D)	0.4
Other/Unknown ²	7.2	6.6	15.5	9.0	7.0	5.7
Total Non-Predators	57.9	56.8	61.8	51.2	55.0	63.0
Total Losses	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Loss as a Percent of Supply ³	9.0	9.8	10.1	9.4	9.6	11.4
Dollar Value of Losses by Cause	1,000 dollars					
Bear	59	93	180	127	92	332
Bobcat	18	18	33	30	96	47
Coyote	2,434	2,576	2,123	2,475	2,142	1,747
Dog	57	36	93	51	66	121
Mountain Lion	59	58	93	107	116	143
Foxes	54	71	116	90	90	95
Wolves	36	36	(D)	146	30	53
Eagles	125	125	133	120	105	184
Ravens	(D)	18	17	45	36	43
Other/Unknown ²	179	180	126	30	116	84
Total Predators	3,021	3,209	2,914	3,220	2,887	2,848
Diseases	435	442	712	215	239	122
Enterotoxaemia	170	167	377	176	141	142
Weather Conditions	1,148	1,241	1,072	967	1,751	3,184
Lambing Complications	667	709	826	908	546	453
Old Age	540	478	514	308	410	383
On Back	83	80	43	138	62	64
Poison	77	93	119	167	101	143
Theft	645	605	21	15	(D)	43
Other/Unknown ²	538	506	1,234	643	470	470
Total Non-Predators	4,302	4,320	4,918	3,535	3,718	5,002
Total Losses	7,323	7,529	7,832	6,755	6,605	7,850

(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, 2014-2019

Cause of Loss	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of Head	Head					
Bear	200	200	300	400	300	600
Bobcat	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	100	(D)
Coyote	2,500	2,300	1,700	3,000	2,400	1,400
Dog	100	(D)	200	100	100	200
Mountain Lion	200	200	200	300	200	300
Foxes	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
Wolves	(D)	(D)	(D)	200	(D)	100
Eagles	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	200
Ravens	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	100	200
Other/Unknown ¹	(D)	100	200	(D)	200	100
Total Predators	3,000	2,800	2,600	4,000	3,400	3,100
Diseases	800	700	1,000	900	800	500
Enterotoxaemia	300	300	600	200	100	(D)
Weather Conditions	700	600	900	400	2,100	3,200
Lambing Complications	800	700	600	1,500	1,200	500
Old Age	2,600	2,400	2,400	1,500	2,000	1,800
On Back	400	400	200	600	300	300
Poison	200	200	400	300	200	300
Theft	1,900	1,700	100	(D)	(D)	200
Other/Unknown ¹	1,300	1,200	2,200	1,600	900	1,100
Total Non-Predators	9,000	8,200	8,400	7,000	7,600	7,900
Total Losses	12,000	11,000	11,000	11,000	11,000	11,000
Percent of Total by Cause	Percent					
Bear	1.7	1.8	2.7	3.6	2.7	5.5
Bobcat	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	0.9	(D)
Coyote	20.8	20.9	15.5	27.3	21.8	12.7
Dog	0.8	(D)	1.8	0.9	0.9	1.8
Mountain Lion	1.7	1.8	1.8	2.7	1.8	2.7
Foxes	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
Wolves	(D)	(D)	(D)	1.8	(D)	0.9
Eagles	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	1.8
Ravens	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	0.9	1.8
Other/Unknown ¹	(D)	0.9	1.8	(D)	1.8	0.9
Total Predators	25.0	25.4	23.6	36.4	30.9	28.2
Diseases	6.7	6.4	9.1	8.2	7.3	4.6
Enterotoxaemia	2.5	2.7	5.5	1.8	0.9	(D)
Weather Conditions	5.8	5.5	8.2	3.6	19.1	29.1
Lambing Complications	6.7	6.4	5.5	13.6	10.9	4.6
Old Age	21.7	21.8	21.8	13.6	18.2	16.4
On Back	3.3	3.6	1.8	5.5	2.7	2.7
Poison	1.7	1.8	3.6	2.7	1.8	2.7
Theft	15.8	15.5	0.9	(D)	(D)	1.8
Other/Unknown ¹	10.8	10.9	20.0	14.5	8.2	10.0
Total Non-Predators	75.0	74.5	76.4	63.6	69.1	71.8
Total Losses	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Dollar Value of Losses by Cause	1,000 dollars					
Bear	42	40	64	82	62	128
Bobcat	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	21	(D)
Coyote	519	458	364	615	492	298
Dog	21	(D)	43	21	21	43
Mountain Lion	42	40	43	62	41	64
Foxes	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
Wolves	(D)	(D)	(D)	41	(D)	21
Eagles	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	43
Ravens	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	21	43
Other/Unknown ¹	(D)	20	43	(D)	41	21
Total Predators	623	557	556	820	697	659
Diseases	166	139	214	185	164	106
Enterotoxaemia	62	60	128	41	21	(D)
Weather Conditions	145	119	193	82	431	680
Lambing Complications	166	139	128	308	246	106
Old Age	540	478	514	308	410	383
On Back	83	80	43	123	62	64
Poison	42	40	86	62	41	64
Theft	394	338	21	(D)	(D)	43
Other/Unknown ¹	270	239	471	328	185	234
Total Non-Predators	1,868	1,632	1,798	1,435	1,558	1,679
Total Losses	2,490	2,189	2,354	2,255	2,255	2,338

(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, 2014-2019 ¹

Cause of Loss	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of Head	Head					
Bear	100	300	700	300	200	1,300
Bobcat	100	100	200	200	500	300
Coyote	10,700	11,900	10,600	12,400	11,000	9,200
Dog	200	200	300	200	300	500
Mountain Lion	100	100	300	300	500	500
Foxes	300	400	700	600	600	600
Wolves	200	200	(D)	700	200	200
Eagles	700	700	800	800	700	900
Ravens	(D)	100	100	300	100	(D)
Other/Unknown ²	1,000	900	500	200	500	400
Total Predators	13,400	14,900	14,200	16,000	14,600	13,900
Diseases	1,500	1,700	3,000	200	500	100
Enterotoxaemia	600	600	1,500	900	800	900
Weather Conditions	5,600	6,300	5,300	5,900	8,800	15,900
Lambing Complications	2,800	3,200	4,200	4,000	2,000	2,200
Old Age	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
On Back	(D)	(D)	(D)	100	(D)	(D)
Poison	200	300	200	700	400	500
Theft	1,400	1,500	(D)	100	(D)	(D)
Other/Unknown ²	1,500	1,500	4,600	2,100	1,900	1,500
Total Non-Predators	13,600	15,100	18,800	14,000	14,400	21,100
Total Losses	27,000	30,000	33,000	30,000	29,000	35,000
Percent of Total by Cause	Percent					
Bear	0.4	1.0	2.1	1.0	0.7	3.7
Bobcat	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.7	1.7	0.9
Coyote	39.6	39.7	32.1	41.3	37.9	26.3
Dog	0.7	0.7	0.9	0.7	1.0	1.4
Mountain Lion	0.4	0.3	0.9	1.0	1.7	1.4
Foxes	1.1	1.3	2.1	2.0	2.1	1.7
Wolves	0.7	0.7	(D)	2.3	0.7	0.6
Eagles	2.6	2.3	2.4	2.7	2.4	2.6
Ravens	(D)	0.3	0.3	1.0	0.3	(D)
Other/Unknown ²	3.7	3.0	1.5	0.7	1.7	1.1
Total Predators	49.6	49.7	43.0	53.3	50.3	39.7
Diseases	5.6	5.7	9.1	0.7	1.7	0.3
Enterotoxaemia	2.2	2.0	4.5	3.0	2.8	2.6
Weather Conditions	20.7	21.0	16.1	19.7	30.3	45.4
Lambing Complications	10.4	10.7	12.7	13.3	6.9	6.3
Old Age	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
On Back	(D)	(D)	(D)	0.3	(D)	(D)
Poison	0.7	1.0	0.6	2.3	1.4	1.4
Theft	5.2	5.0	(D)	0.3	(D)	(D)
Other/Unknown ²	5.6	5.0	13.9	7.0	6.6	4.3
Total Non-Predators	50.4	50.3	57.0	46.7	49.7	60.3
Total Losses	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Dollar Value of Losses by Cause	1,000 dollars					
Bear	18	53	116	45	30	205
Bobcat	18	18	33	30	75	47
Coyote	1,915	2,118	1,760	1,860	1,650	1,449
Dog	36	36	50	30	45	79
Mountain Lion	18	18	50	45	75	79
Foxes	54	71	116	90	90	95
Wolves	36	36	(D)	105	30	32
Eagles	125	125	133	120	105	142
Ravens	(D)	18	17	45	15	(D)
Other/Unknown ²	179	160	83	30	75	63
Total Predators	2,399	2,652	2,357	2,400	2,190	2,189
Diseases	269	303	498	30	75	16
Enterotoxaemia	107	107	249	135	120	142
Weather Conditions	1,002	1,121	880	885	1,320	2,504
Lambing Complications	501	570	697	600	300	347
Old Age	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
On Back	(D)	(D)	(D)	15	(D)	(D)
Poison	36	53	33	105	60	79
Theft	251	267	(D)	15	(D)	(D)
Other/Unknown ²	269	267	764	315	285	236
Total Non-Predators	2,434	2,688	3,121	2,100	2,160	3,323
Total Losses	4,833	5,340	5,478	4,500	4,350	5,512

(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.

Totals may not add due to rounding.