

ARIZONA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION
POSITION PAPER
Mexican Gray Wolf Reintroduction Program

In 1992 the Arizona Cattlemen's Association passed a resolution supporting the study of reintroduction of the Mexican gray wolf. That resolution continues in effect today.

Now, eight months after wolves were released, ranchers are being blamed for the death of wolves by some members of the public and, through innuendo, by the media. Such innuendo and accusations against ranch families are akin to hate crimes. The Arizona Cattlemen's Association has requested intervention from the F.B.I. to investigate threats made against its members and staff, as well as the members and staffs of the New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association and the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Bureau. The organizations are concerned that today's climate of suspicion, fear and anger could escalate into acts of violence.

Any informed individual would realize that it makes no sense for a rancher to shoot a wolf. In the first place, the \$100,000 fine for killing an endangered species would bankrupt most ranch families in this state. Having the felony conviction on a rancher's record would cause the immediate loss of the ranch because he would not be able to obtain or retain a federal grazing permit. This would result in the loss of the family's livelihood, as well as a ranch developed and improved over generations.

The Arizona Cattlemen's Association feels that the three agencies responsible for the administration of the Mexican gray wolf reintroduction program should make a full disclosure of all the details of the program. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service and Arizona Game and Fish Department should counter the rhetoric with facts about the wolves, their lives in the wild, their interactions with humans, their recapture and their deaths. The reintroduction plan, as developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has a number of flaws that the Arizona Cattlemen's Association felt would hamper the success of the program. The concerns included the following points:

- The preferred wild prey base has been declining in the area for several years. Populations of prey species have been severely impacted by numerous predators – mountain lions, black bears and coyotes – already in the area.
- Many questions about the genetic purity and health of the captive Mexican gray wolves still exist.

- The wolves have been raised in captivity and are ill prepared to survive in the wilds.
- Valid concerns about the reintroduction program have also been raised by the governors of both Arizona and New Mexico, the State Game and Fish Departments of both Arizona and New Mexico, county and local governments, officials of the Apache/Sitgreaves National Forest and other informed individuals.

While the organization has never opposed a valid, scientific reintroduction program that had a chance of success, we have felt all along that this specific program was ill advised. The program, as circumstances have proven, is not in the best interest of the local residents, ranching families, the general public or the wolves themselves. The wolves have been trapped, drugged, caged, relocated and starved.

The willful and wanton killing of any endangered species is a terrible, unlawful act, which the Arizona Cattlemen's Association does not condone.

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