

2/17/16

February 17, 2016

Senator Steve Bair, Chairman
Senate Resources and Environment Committee
Idaho Legislature
Boise, ID 83702

RE: Wildlife Depredation of Farm Crops

Dear Chairman Bair and Members of the Committee:

Chad Larsen Farms along with Richard and Peggy Larsen Farms own 12,000 acres of land in Jefferson and Clark counties of Southeast Idaho. Grain, Wheat, Hay, Potatoes and Barley are all crops that are grown. We currently have 65% of our acreage in hay. Some organic. We do our best to winter our hay that we are unable to move by tarping it. This protects it's from the elements of weather but doesn't seem to keep the animals out. It is very costly being it is \$10 a ton. It costs us \$4500 on average to tarp one stack in its entirety. With commodity prices lower we cannot afford to tarp entire stacks only the top and that's when animals can come in and cause great damage.

We try to get one ton straw bales and stack them two high around the stack to keep the animals out. This costs us around \$600. With about 70 stacks of hay we aren't always able to provide enough straw to do this method. When the elk come in to feed on our hay stacks it is a big nuisance during and a costly one. Since 2004 we have lost between \$60,000-70,000. We had years where the hay prices were up making our loss greater than in other years. These losses are due to the elk breaking down the bales then causing the stack to fall and feeding on it.

We have not been compensated for any of these losses. When we have contacted the Idaho Falls Fish and Game office, they've sent someone out to assess the situation, but nothing was ever done about these damages over the years.

We were given a depredation tag for a cow. The frustration in that gesture was we weren't having cow elk coming in. They were bulls. Provided are pictures showing the bulls that have been feeding on our hay for years. For over 10 years we have had herds of bulls coming in and attacking our hay stacks. Sometimes they tear through the tarps with their horns. They tear down the straw with their horns and they break into the hay that way.

The poppers provided by Fish and Game seem to only work for a week or two then it seems the animals are used to the sound and aren't bothered by it and still come in.

It is frustrating to see animals starve. It breaks our hearts, but unfortunately we aren't in a position to feed them. If we were compensated for the losses we would feel differently, if we were given a depredation tag that would be on the sex of the specie we were having a problem with, or if Fish and Game could better assist us in keeping them out with costs. We ask that something be done to help these animals out and to help us out as well.

Sincerely,

Chad Larsen, Owner/Operator
Chad Larsen Farms