

2/17/16

Subject: Wildlife Depredation Hearing

Hello, My name is Don Alt and I farm with my father, John Alt, on a small 30 cow/calf operation near Bonners Ferry. Our Elk problem consists of a small herd of 15 to 20 animals that stay year round. The number bumps up to 150 to 175 starting the end of November thru January. If the snow fall is deep the Elk problem continues thru February. Over the past 3 years we have lost 12 tons of grass/alfalfa hay to Elk and Deer. Elk coming into our barns and feeding with our cattle started 6 years ago. There was never a count over 15 to 20 head before this and my father has owned this land for more than 50 years. The problem we have does not stop at hay in the barn being destroyed. The continuous feeding by the Elk and Deer drops the yield we get from our hay ground over the year. Also fall pasture is limited and having to start feeding hay earlier than normal has become common place now. This can be taxing during drought years like 2015.

The wolf population has increased the amount of Elk in the lower farming areas in the last 6 years. The numbers of Elk in the region has not lessened but where they find sanctuary during the winter months from the wolf population has changed. Instead of the Elk staying near the mountain ranges and the benches near the mountains, they now venture into the farm land and hay barns near people where they feel protected during the winter.

I do think the 50 tag controlled hunt #2046 that was started this year on private land is a good option. A neighbor and I both drew this tag and harvested Elk on our property. There were also 3 depredation elk taken on our property. One suggestion would be to increase the controlled hunt to 75 tags, cows only, private property and October to December 31st. Hunt #2046 was from August to December 31st.

I do hope my comments have help shed light on a problem that needs to be continuously addressed and adjusted by Fish and Game.

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