

Compensation Programs for Elk Damage on Yukon Farms

Please note: Call the Agriculture Branch or the Conservation Services Branch when you notice elk on your fields or damage from elk.

Conservation Officer Services Branch: (867) 667-5652

Agriculture Branch: (867) 667-5838

Toll free: 1-800-661-0408

Farmers that are experiencing damage to fences, crops, fields or stored feed on titled agriculture lands are to call for an inspection by the Agriculture Development Officer and a Conservation Officer to verify impacts. Farmers are required to keep record of damages and ongoing elk activity. If warranted, a Conservation Officer will issue a Wildlife Act Permit to harass elk using a variety of methods. If harassment is unsuccessful the Conservation Officer will work to issue Permit Hunt Authorization for the farm area.

Compensation Programs

1. Harassment Program

A permit is issued by the Conservation Officer and a compensation claim is authorized by Agriculture branch. Farmers can claim for expenses incurred to deter elk from their farms. Compensation will be provided at \$25/hour up to a maximum of \$1,000 (costs over \$1,000 can be reviewed by the GF2 committee). Reimbursement will be provided on receipt of documented hours for each day of activities, methods used, outcome of harassment and report on any additional activities used to deter elk, eg; permitted harvest. The harassment program application form is provided by the COSB or Agriculture Branch staff on the first farm visit.

2. Fencing Damage

The costs of refencing or fence repair is either a fair claim submitted by the producer based on hiring the labour or based on the following formula:

\$40.00/post

\$50 to restring wire/incident

\$10 for miscellaneous repairs/incident.

Fencing paid out at 100%

Farmers affected by the elk are encouraged to use flagging to show fence locations.

3. Feed loss

This program applies to lost stored feed and lost grazing. Stored feed loses are paid out at 100%. The payment for stored feed is based on the value of the lost bales or the cost to buy new bales in order to feed livestock.

Grazing loss is paid out at 80%. Grazing loss is based on an assessment of the grazing capacity prior to the elk damage and afterwards. The grazing loss is only available if the producer had intended to feed livestock in the area that was impacted and is only available if the producer had to buy feed to replace the lost feed.

4. Overwintering Hay Field Crop Loss Determination

This new compensation process applies to ongoing year over year reduction in hay yields due to elk living on hay fields. Hazing and proper fencing must also be included in the farm activities to prevent damage, but damage may occur nonetheless.

A study was completed over the winter of 2014/15 which monitored elk bedding and pawing habits across a large hay field. Four hundred data points were collected in an early spring assessment which showed a 20% reduction in productivity at the points where the elk were either bedding or pawing. Movement of animals (walking) was not quantified, nor is it of concern for field damage.

The compensation provides for 20% of yield losses year over year in the area of impact. The farmer has to provide yield records for the area that is being impacted and records must span back over the year of damage and the previous 5 years so an average of hay yields can be determined (olympic averaging is used).

For this program provided there is impact across a field the entire field can be included in the compensation program. If only certain areas of the field are impacted by elk bedding and pawing, then those areas must be measured.

Other factors that impact hay stand yields: seasonal moisture, winter temperatures, fertilizer application, irrigation, age and type of the grass, weather variability, livestock access, and weed control.

5. Seed costs

Winter kill reduces the number of viable plants per acre, after damage has occurred it is a best practice to reseed either with a no-till drill or an aerator. This program will provide compensation at a maximum of \$75/acre for seed costs with receipts and an inspection showing reseeding occurred.

Compensation Programs Eligibility Criteria

The following criteria will be used to accept or reject an application to the compensation program:

- Fields must be located within the Yukon
- Applicant must provide proof of ownership or lease confirmation on fields with damage.
- Applicant shows a firm commitment to preventing and/or reducing the amount of damage resulting from wild ungulate caused damage on forage crops which includes approved prevention/mitigation activities.
- Applicant must allow for hunting on their farm
- Eligible damage is limited to **cultivated forage crops** currently in production or **fencing** that surrounds high value crop areas. Assistance will not cover protecting feed crops not brought in from

the field that could have been harvested or crops which are stored in a manner that cannot be protected.

- Standing, mowed, swathed, stooked, or left-in-field forage crops will only be an eligible crop for maximum 2 years. This is to allow for land development and allow farmers the opportunity to adjust practices considering elk are within the environment. If a claim is made in the second year the claimant will have to explain year over year changes in farm management that reduced predation.
- Damage must be inspected prior to the crop being harvested or being grazed by livestock in order to be eligible for compensation. The producer must permit access to fields for crop assessment as well as provide supporting field information (maps, acreage, age, type of stand, irrigation and fertilizer information).
- Producers must notify the Agriculture Branch if there is an intention to plow and replant a portion of a field as a result of wild ungulate damage.
- Producers must notify the Agriculture Branch while the damage is occurring or as soon as possible after the damage has occurred to allow for the damage to be inspected. Damage must be inspected prior to the crop being harvested or grazed by livestock in order to be eligible for compensation. The producer must permit access to fields for crop/plant loss determination as well as provide supporting field information (maps, acreage, age, type of stand, irrigation and fertilizer information).
- Losses will be determined according to generally established crop loss adjusting procedures.