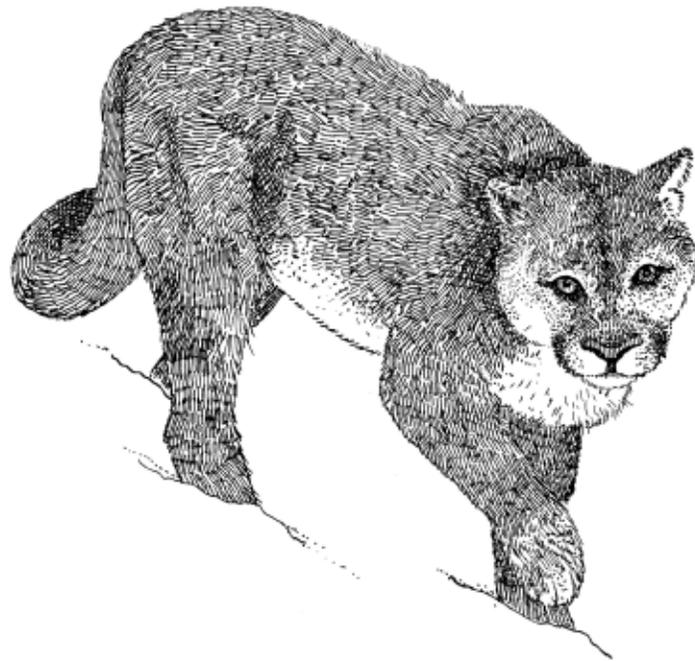


MOUNTAIN LION RESPONSE PLAN



NEBRASKA GAME AND PARKS COMMISSION
2200 NORTH 33RD STREET
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1 Background

Since the first confirmed mountain lion occurrence in nearly a century in 1991, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) Wildlife and Law Enforcement personnel frequently receive reports of mountain lion occurrences in Nebraska. As of January 2004, 13 mountain lion occurrences were confirmed in Nebraska, and more will almost certainly follow as populations in the western United States are recovering and expanding their range.

While the majority of mountain lions for which gender and age have been determined since 1991 seem to fit the pattern of young transients moving into the state from areas outside Nebraska, resident animals and perhaps even a small population may exist in the western portions of the state such as the Pine Ridge and Wildcat Hills areas, as well as along the Niobrara River in northwestern and north central Nebraska. Given high deer densities and the distribution of potential travel corridors, encounters in populated areas are also possible. This has already been shown by mountain lion occurrences within the city limits of St. Paul (Nov. 2000) and Omaha (Oct. 2003). In addition to dispersal of wild mountain lions, it is possible that some animals were illegally released or escaped from captivity.

As in many other states that recently began experiencing a rebound of mountain lions, there are conspiracy theories about secret mountain lion reintroductions in Nebraska, allegedly conducted by the NGPC. The NGPC has not reintroduced mountain lions into Nebraska and has no plans to do so. It is important to emphasize that these rumors are just that – unfounded and patently false - and are perpetuated by individuals who are not informed correctly. The NGPC's mission is the stewardship of the state's fish, wildlife, park and outdoor recreation resources in the best long-term interest of the people and those resources. Conducting secret releases of a large predatory species without public approval would not be consistent with this mission.

The NGPC will address dangerous encounters with humans and domestic animals in a serious manner, while recognizing that mountain lions that may potentially be reclaiming portions of their native range should not be regarded as a general threat to human life and economy in Nebraska. The contents of this response plan are based on the following basic tenets:

- **Mountain lions are a component of Nebraska's native biodiversity.**
- **A mountain lion will be destroyed if it threatens people.**
- **A mountain lion will be destroyed if it is attacking or attempting to attack livestock.**
- **If a mountain lion is not threatening people and has not caused depredation, it will be left undisturbed.**
- **Reports of mountain lion occurrences will only be classified as confirmed if evidence and the circumstances unambiguously prove such an occurrence.**
- **Mountain lions will not be relocated or reintroduced in Nebraska.**
- **The Commission's response to reporting individuals shall be consistent, professional and respectful.**
- **The Commission will provide accurate and timely information to the public concerning mountain lions in Nebraska.**

It is imperative that professional scrutiny and appropriate response accompany each viable report of a possible mountain lion occurrence in Nebraska. This response plan outlines NGPC policy/protocol for collecting and investigating mountain lion occurrence reports, classifying reports and distributing information, as well as coordinating NGPC actions with the interests and jurisdiction of other entities. For additional information about mountain lions, including natural history, status and regulations, consult the NGPC Mountain Lion Brochure.

2 Mountain Lion Work Group

The Mountain Lion Work Group consists of representatives of the NGPC Wildlife Division, NGPC Law Enforcement, and NGPC Information and Education Division. Work Group members are listed in Appendix F of this document. The duties of this Work Group include, but are not limited to, the evaluation of evidence leading to confirmation of a mountain lion occurrence, the confirmation of occurrence reports, the coordination of responses to occurrences and the media, and the periodic review and revision of appendices to this document. When evaluating and responding to mountain lion related issues, the NGPC Mountain Lion Work Group will also include the Wildlife Division District Manager of the respective District in which the issue is occurring.

3 General Guidelines for Handling Mountain Lion Occurrence Reports

The following guidelines apply to all situations involving mountain lions or alleged mountain lions in Nebraska.

3.1 Collecting Occurrence Reports

- 3.1.1 It is important that our response to every reporting individual be consistent, professional and respectful.
- 3.1.2 Reports shall only be accepted from the observer. Second- or third-hand reporters shall be advised to inform the observer to make the report him-/herself before NGPC will accept and possibly investigate the report.
- 3.1.3 The observer should be asked about the existence of evidence that can be used for verification (e.g. videotape, photographs, hair, blood or feces, photos or plaster cast of tracks).
- 3.1.4 NGPC Wildlife Division or Law Enforcement personnel receiving information about a possible mountain lion occurrence shall complete Parts 1 and 2 of the Mountain Lion Occurrence Report Form (Appendix B) and forward the form to the investigator (if different person).

3.2 Investigating Occurrence Reports

- 3.2.1 An investigation shall only be conducted if a report is recent enough to allow a reasonable chance of confirmation (fresh evidence, etc.). If no reasonable chance of confirmation exists (lack of evidence, long latency between observation and report), complete Part 3 of the Mountain Lion Occurrence Report Form (Appendix B) and go to 3.3.
- 3.2.2 Evaluate if the description provided by the observer unambiguously excludes a mountain lion as an option. If it does, complete Part 3 of the Mountain Lion Occurrence Report Form (Appendix B) and go to 3.3. If a mountain lion occurrence cannot be excluded unambiguously, continue with 3.2.3.

- 3.2.3 If evidence has been collected by the observer or is available at the site of the occurrence, request submission of evidence for evaluation or arrange for a site visit to collect evidence when feasible and continue with 3.2.4. If the observer did not collect evidence and did not encounter potential evidence on site, complete Part 3 of the Mountain Lion Occurrence Report Form (Appendix B) and continue with 3.3.
- 3.2.4 Investigators of possible mountain lion occurrences may use the Mountain Lion Field Investigation Protocol and Checklist (Appendix A) when conducting site visits/field investigations and when collecting/inspecting potential evidence.
- 3.2.5 Inspect and label all evidence collected on site or submitted by the observer.
- 3.2.6 A site visit may also be required to link evidence submitted by the observer with the site of suspected occurrence, especially if no documentation exists placing animal or evidence (e.g. tracks) in the location where it was reported to have been observed. This precaution may be necessary to avoid misclassification of an occurrence report that may be the result of evidence manufacturing or manipulation. The investigation may also include further questioning of the observer and other potential witnesses.
- 3.2.7 Due to the high cost of DNA testing of individual samples, molecular analysis may only be conducted if there is a high likelihood that a sample is from a mountain lion. Evidence intended for molecular analysis shall be collected and stored in a manner that prevents contamination and DNA breakdown (see Appendix A).
- 3.2.8 Observation reports that do not involve a threat to humans or livestock shall be investigated within reasonable time (preferably less than 48 hours) to prevent substantial loss or decay of evidence.
- 3.2.9 All reports that indicate immediate and verifiable threat to humans shall be investigated as a high priority and as soon as possible (ASAP).
- 3.2.10 All livestock depredation in which mountain lions are suspected shall be investigated ASAP (preferably within 18 hours) if 3.2.1 is also met.
- 3.2.11 Investigations and their results shall be detailed in Part 3 of the Mountain Lion Occurrence Report Form (Appendix B) and filed together with any evidence collected during the investigation.

3.3 Preliminary Classification

- 3.3.1 Until final classification of a report by the NGPC Mountain Lion Work Group or the NGPC Furbearer Program Manager, all reports will be classified as “status pending”. Based on findings of the initial investigation of the observation and interview(s) with the observer, the investigator of a mountain lion occurrence shall recommend a preliminary classification. This recommendation will serve as a starting point for further investigation and set guidelines for further processing of the report. Preliminary classifications may be any of the following:

Probable – Physical evidence and the circumstances of the observation suggest that the animal in question is a mountain lion.

Possible – Physical evidence does not exist or is inconclusive, but the circumstances of the observation and the observers experience suggest the possibility that the animal in question may be a mountain lion.

Unconfirmed – No physical evidence can be found or the inspection of physical evidence presented is inconclusive. The description of the circumstances of the observation may be inconclusive and/or the observer's degree of experience is unknown or questionable.

Not a mountain lion – Physical evidence and/or the description of the circumstances of the observation suggest that the animal in question is not a mountain lion.

3.4 Filing Occurrence Reports

3.4.1 A Mountain Lion Occurrence Report Form with Parts 1, 2, and 3 completed (classification: "status pending") shall be forwarded ASAP to the NGPC Furbearer Program Manager and the NGPC Wildlife District Manager for the district in which the occurrence was reported. Materials that can be used as evidence to make a determination will be submitted with the report to the NGPC Furbearer Program Manager.

3.4.2 In addition to receiving the completed report form, the NGPC Furbearer Program Manager, the NGPC Wildlife District Manager, and NGPC Law Enforcement District Supervisor shall be alerted ASAP via telephone or email if the reported occurrence has the preliminary classification "probable".

3.5 Final Classification of Occurrence Reports

3.5.1 All reports with preliminary classification "probable" shall be reviewed by the NGPC Mountain Lion Work Group before a final classification is made.

3.5.2 If the occurrence report is not recommended to be classified as "probable", review by the NGPC Furbearer Program Manager is sufficient for final classification.

3.5.3 Regardless of the recommended classification, at least 3 members of the NGPC Mountain Lion Work Group, including the Furbearer Program Manager (or designee), shall examine physical evidence resulting in a confirmed observation, and there must be concurrence in identification prior to issuing a statement of verification.

3.5.4 Reports with preliminary classification "possible", "unconfirmed" or "not a mountain lion" shall be reviewed by the NGPC Furbearer Program Manager. The NGPC Furbearer Program Manager will make the final determination on all reports to be classified as "unconfirmed" or "not a mountain lion".

3.5.5 After reports have been reviewed, available evidence has been inspected, and outside experts have been consulted as needed, the report will be re-classified as any of the following:

Confirmed – Evidence exists that, in conjunction with the circumstances of the observation, proves unambiguously that the animal in question is a mountain lion.

Unconfirmed – No physical evidence can be found or the inspection of physical evidence presented is inconclusive.

Not a mountain lion – Physical evidence exists that proves unambiguously that the animal in question is not a mountain lion.

3.5.6 After a final determination has been made as to the classification of an occurrence report, the NGPC Furbearer Program Manager shall complete Part 4 of the Mountain Lion Occurrence

Report Form (Appendix B).

- 3.5.7 If a report is classified as “confirmed”, the NGPC Furbearer Program Manager shall forward the report to the NGPC Law Enforcement Division Administrator, the NGPC Wildlife Division Administrator, the NGPC Wildlife Division Management Section District Manager, and the NGPC Law Enforcement District Supervisor by the end of the next working day.
- 3.5.8 Unconfirmed reports and occurrences classified as “not a mountain lion” shall be forwarded by the NGPC Furbearer Program Manager to the NGPC Law Enforcement District Supervisor and the Wildlife District Manager of the respective district within 7 days after a final classification has been made.
- 3.5.9 The NGPC Furbearer Program Manager shall retain copies of all Mountain Lion Occurrence Reports.
- 3.5.10 After a final determination has been made as to the classification of an occurrence report, the NGPC Wildlife Division Management Section District Manager shall mail a standard form letter (Appendix C) to the reporting party that indicates the final classification of the occurrence report and may detail how and why the decision was made. Each letter shall be accompanied by the latest edition of the NGPC mountain lion brochure.

3.6 Media Contacts and Issuing Statements

- 3.6.1 NGPC biologists and Conservation Officers shall forward all media inquiries to the NGPC Wildlife District Manager. NGPC District Managers that are familiar with the NGPC Mountain Lion Response Plan may handle inquiries from the media regarding mountain lion occurrence reports in their district. Information about media contacts shall be forwarded to the NGPC Wildlife Division Administrator ASAP after such contacts have been made. Certain inquiries (see 3.6.4.) shall be forwarded directly to the NGPC Wildlife Division Administrator.
- 3.6.2 If media contacts by biologists or Conservation Officers are unavoidable at the site of an investigation or potential occurrence, staff familiar with the investigation may disclose basic information about the investigation. All other inquiries shall be forwarded to the NGPC Wildlife District Manager or the NGPC Wildlife Division Administrator ASAP.
- 3.6.3 As long as an occurrence is classified as “status pending”, this shall be clearly stated to the media. No comment on a potential classification shall be made until the NGPC Furbearer Program Manager or the NGPC Mountain Lion Work Group has made and disclosed a final determination.
- 3.6.4 Any contacts with the media related to mountain lion occurrence reports that involve the following (regardless of classification) shall be referred to the NGPC Wildlife Division Administrator or designee:
 - Potential attack on a human
 - Highly agitated member(s) of the public
 - Controversial or incorrect representation of an event in the media
 - Inquiries about portions of the investigation conducted by the NGPC Furbearer Program Manager or the NGPC Mountain Lion Work Group
 - Complex policy issues
- 3.6.5 Any contact with the media related to mountain lion occurrence reports that involve criminal investigations shall be referred to the NGPC Law Enforcement Division Administrator ASAP.
- 3.6.6 A news release may be issued by the NGPC Wildlife Division Administrator following a confirmed report of a mountain lion occurrence or following a classification of high-profile reports or investigations. All news releases will be reviewed by the Director and by at least three

members of the NGPC Mountain Lion Work Group.

- 3.6.7 In the event that a statement of confirmation is issued which is later determined to be erroneous, a correction shall be sent to all recipients of the original statement, including news media if there was a press release. The correction shall be retained for permanent record and the earlier record shall be withdrawn as a verified occurrence.

4 Guidelines for Responding to Situations Involving Mountain Lions

While this section outlines responses to various scenarios, some incidents cannot be anticipated and will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

4.1 Observation of a Mountain Lion or Mountain Lion Sign

- 4.1.1 If an occurrence report is confirmed but the animal is not considered a threat to humans by the NGPC Mountain Lion Work Group and has not caused agricultural depredation, it will be left undisturbed. An effort may be made by NGPC personnel to monitor movements and activities.
- 4.1.2 If an occurrence report is confirmed and the animal is considered a threat to humans or livestock or is observed free ranging within the limits of municipalities, follow the guidelines in Sections 4.3, 4.2, or 4.4, respectively.
- 4.1.3 If the animal observed appears to be sick or incapacitated, an attempt will be made to kill it. If a mountain lion carcass is on hand, follow the guidelines in 4.10.
- 4.1.4 Follow the guidelines in Section 3 to take, investigate and file reports of observations of mountain lions or mountain lion sign.

4.2 Livestock Depredation by a Potential Mountain Lion

- 4.2.1 A mountain lion, encountered in the process of attempting or causing livestock depredation, may be killed immediately by the landowner or his/her agent without prior notice to NGPC. After killing a depredating mountain lion, the landowner shall immediately contact NGPC to file a report and arrange for transfer of the mountain lion's carcass to NGPC.
- 4.2.2 In a case where livestock has been putatively injured or killed by a mountain lion, the owner of that livestock shall be advised to leave unaltered the injured livestock or carcass and the scene of the attack until NGPC staff can arrive and begin investigating the circumstances of the attack and coordinate a response.
- 4.2.3 Field investigations to confirm depredation reports shall be conducted by NGPC staff as outlined in 3.2. The assistance of USDA-APHIS-WS personnel and any available experts may be solicited for investigations.
- 4.2.4 It is the position of the NGPC that in the event that a landowner kills a mountain lion on his property within 15 days after a NGPC-investigated livestock depredation event on that property which resulted in a preliminary classification of "probable" or "possible" (Section 3.3), said mountain lion may be considered a predator preying on livestock pursuant to § 37-559. The livestock owner shall also be informed that the carcass of any mountain lion needs to be turned over to the NGPC immediately and unaltered (other than injuries inflicted during apprehension).
- 4.2.5 If a landowner requests action, and evidence of depredation by a mountain lion exists, attempts will be made to prevent further damages by destroying the offending animal. Possibilities for

- destroying the animal will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the NGPC Wildlife District Manager and other members of the NGPC Mountain Lion Work Group.
- 4.2.6 If the carcass of a livestock animal potentially killed by a mountain lion is fresh (24 hrs or less), NGPC staff with possible assistance from USDA-APHIS-WS personnel may set traps around the carcass to trap a predator that may be returning to the trap site. Should a mountain lion be trapped, it will be killed by NGPC personnel or by USDA-APHIS-WS personnel with NGPC permission.
- 4.2.7 Should mountain lion hounds be available and a confirmed or highly possible mountain lion depredation event is recent (within 36 hrs), a decision may be made jointly by the NGPC and the landowner to utilize a dog team to apprehend a depredating mountain lion. The landowner shall be responsible for gaining all necessary permissions to enter surrounding properties within a 5-mile radius of his/her property for the purpose of capturing and killing a mountain lion with a dog team. Throughout the hunt, the landowner shall coordinate further access and permissions as necessary. The hunt will be conducted and led by the dog team leader in assistance by NGPC personnel. All hunt participants will be designated by the NGPC. If a mountain lion is treed as the result of the hunt and if it is likely to be the offending animal, it will be killed by NGPC personnel or by the dog team leader with NGPC permission.
- 4.2.8 If attempts are made to destroy an animal, notification shall be made through the chain of command to Division Administrators for both Wildlife and Law Enforcement Divisions ASAP.
- 4.2.9 If a mountain lion carcass is on hand, follow the guidelines in 4.10.
- 4.2.10 Attacks on domestic animals other than livestock shall be investigated and responded to in the same manner as livestock depredation, however, exceptions shall be made if an attack was provoked by a domestic animal or if the domestic animal was free-roaming.
- 4.2.11 Follow the guidelines in Section 3 to take, investigate and file reports of livestock depredation and attack on other domestic animals by a mountain lion.

4.3 Threat to or Attack on Humans by a Potential Mountain Lion

- 4.3.1 If a mountain lion attacks or shows unprovoked aggression toward humans or is otherwise considered an immediate threat to humans, an immediate field response is required and an attempt will be made to destroy the offending animal. Such situations can be handled by Conservation Officers and Wildlife Division Management Section personnel. The help of USDA-APHIS-WS personnel, local police department and other entities (e.g. zoological facility) may be recruited.
- 4.3.2 It is the position of the NGPC that, if a mountain lion attacks or shows unprovoked aggression towards persons, such persons should be able to defend themselves without penalty. The NGPC believes that clear statutory authority should be established to allow citizens to destroy mountain lions in any such circumstances; the NGPC will pursue legislation to this end.
- 4.3.3 If a mountain lion is considered a direct threat to human safety, the NGPC Law Enforcement Division Administrator, NGPC Wildlife Division Administrator and the NGPC Furbearer Program Manager shall be contacted ASAP.
- 4.3.4 If a mountain lion has killed a person or is suspected in the killing of a person, the local police or sheriff shall be contacted immediately. The scene of the killing and the corpse shall be left undisturbed, as the law enforcement entity(s) with jurisdiction over human mortalities will conduct the investigation. NGPC Law Enforcement and the NGPC Mountain Lion Work Group shall offer their assistance with the investigation and the destruction of the offending animal.
- 4.3.5 If a mountain lion carcass is on hand, follow the guidelines in 4.10.

- 4.3.6 Follow the guidelines in Section 3 to take, investigate and file reports of threat to or an attack on people by a mountain lion.

4.4 Occurrence of a Mountain Lion Within the Limits of a Municipality

- 4.4.1 If a mountain lion is confirmed within the limits of a municipality (exception: animals held captive legally), an immediate field response is required and an attempt will be made to safely kill the animal. Such situations can be handled by Conservation Officers and Wildlife Division Management Section personnel. The help of USDA-APHIS-WS personnel, local police department and other entities (e.g. zoological facility) may be recruited.
- 4.4.2 Within city limits, NGPC staff, other than NGPC Conservation Officers, may only use firearms if authorized by the local police department or sheriff.
- 4.4.3 If a mountain lion is considered a direct threat to human safety, the NGPC Law Enforcement Division Administrator, NGPC Wildlife Division Administrator, and the NGPC Furbearer Program Manager shall be contacted ASAP.
- 4.4.4 If a mountain lion carcass is on hand, follow the guidelines in 4.10.
- 4.4.5 If the animal has left the city limits before it could be destroyed, and it has not caused any damages, nor does it appear to pose a continuing threat, it will not be pursued, although attempts may be made to monitor its movements and possible re-entry into city limits.
- 4.4.6 Follow the guidelines in Section 3 to take, investigate and file reports of mountain lion occurrences within the limits of a municipality.

4.5 Killing or Injuring of a Mountain Lion by a Person

Scenarios that could result in the killing or injuring of a mountain lion by people can include but are not limited to shooting, trapping (see also 4.8), and striking with vehicles.

- 4.5.1 If a mountain lion has sustained incapacitating injuries, an effort will be made to locate and kill the animal.
- 4.5.2 To prevent loss/decay of valuable evidence, information about a suspected human-induced mountain lion mortality shall be forwarded directly to NGPC Law Enforcement and the NGPC Furbearer Program Manager ASAP after a report is received, so that it can be determined if the collection of additional evidence is necessary.
- 4.5.3 If a mountain lion carcass is on hand, follow the guidelines in 4.10. However, if possible, the NGPC Furbearer Program Manager and NGPC Law Enforcement shall be contacted prior to the removal of a mountain lion carcass from the location where it was found.
- 4.5.4 The NGPC Furbearer Program Manager, with assistance from NGPC Law Enforcement, will conduct an investigation to evaluate the circumstances and cause of death.
- 4.5.5 An effort shall be made to determine not just the physical details of the incident but also the motivation leading to it, such as accidental killing, killing in self defense, and wanton killing (poaching).
- 4.5.6 Follow the guidelines in Section 3 to take, investigate and file reports of the killing or injuring of a mountain lion by a person.

4.6 Other Mountain Lion Mortalities

- 4.6.1 If a mountain lion carcass is on hand, follow the guidelines in 4.10. However, if possible, the NGPC Furbearer Program Manager, NGPC Wildlife District Manager, and NGPC Law

Enforcement shall be contacted prior to the removal of a mountain lion carcass from the location where it was found.

- 4.6.2 The NGPC Furbearer Program Manager, with assistance from NGPC Law Enforcement and the NGPC Wildlife District Manager will conduct an investigation to evaluate the circumstances and cause of death.
- 4.6.3 Follow the guidelines in Section 3 to take, investigate and file reports of mountain lion mortalities.

4.7 Tranquilization and Translocation of a Mountain Lion by NGPC

- 4.7.1 Tranquilization of a free-ranging mountain lion will be conducted only if the circumstances (e.g. collection of zoo specimen, legitimate research activities) warrant such a response. Tranquilization shall not be regarded as a viable option when dealing with injured mountain lions or mountain lions that are considered by the NGPC Mountain Lion Work Group a threat to humans or domestic animals.
- 4.7.2 Under no circumstances, not even under the conditions described in 4.7.1 and 4.8.2, shall a mountain lion be released into the wild in Nebraska after it has been moved for a distance exceeding 100 yards from the place where it was captured, or if it has been imported into Nebraska from out-of state.

4.8 Accidental Live-Capture of a Mountain Lion

- 4.8.1 A mountain lion may be accidentally live-captured in a trap (e.g. foothold or snare). Trappers should be made aware that upon capture of a potential mountain lion, they need to contact the NGPC immediately. NGPC Wildlife Division personnel or the NGPC Conservation Officer nearest to the capture location shall immediately visit the trap site and assess and document the situation.
- 4.8.2 If the animal has not sustained life-threatening injuries and can be released safely (e.g. box-type trap), it shall be released at the spot where it was captured. The situation shall be assessed carefully - in most cases release will not be an option.
- 4.8.3 If the release cannot be conducted safely (e.g. foothold traps, snares, etc.) or if the animal has sustained incapacitating injuries, the animal shall be killed by NGPC personnel on site or by USDA-APHIS-WS personnel upon NGPC approval.
- 4.8.4 If a mountain lion carcass is on hand, follow the guidelines in 4.10.
- 4.8.5 Follow the guidelines in Section 3 to take, investigate and file reports of accidental live captures of mountain lions, regardless of whether the animal was released or destroyed.

4.9 Illegal Possession of a Live Mountain Lion

- 4.9.1 If NGPC receives information about the illegal possession of a live mountain lion, NGPC Law Enforcement shall confiscate the animal. This may be done in coordination with local police and other authorities with jurisdiction in the particular case/location.
- 4.9.2 If the animal can be apprehended alive safely and efficiently and if a temporary holding facility is available, it shall be captured alive and transferred to such a facility (humane society, zoo, available NGPC facility). If the animal shows signs of aggression or live capture is not feasible for other reasons, it shall be killed. If a mountain lion carcass is on hand, follow the guidelines in 4.10.
- 4.9.3 NGPC Law Enforcement shall investigate the circumstances of the illegal possession of a live

- mountain lion, including the source and acquisition details.
- 4.9.4 Unless a legitimate, AZA-accredited zoological facility comes forward within 3 days of capture to adopt a mountain lion captured under the conditions outlined in 4.9.2, the animal may be killed by NGPC or the operators of the holding facility after obtaining approval from the NGPC Mountain Lion Work Group.
- 4.9.5 The NGPC Furbearer Program Manager shall be responsible for coordinating the transfer of a mountain lion to an adopting zoological facility.
- 4.9.6 Follow the guidelines in Section 3 to take, investigate and file reports about illegal possession of a mountain lion.
- 4.10 Disposition of a Mountain Lion Carcass or Portions Thereof
- 4.10.1 Any mountain lion carcass or portions thereof shall be left unaltered and turned over to the NGPC Furbearer Program Manager ASAP. To prevent further decay, the carcass or portions thereof shall be kept cool (not frozen, unless absolutely necessary).
- 4.10.2 The carcass of a mountain lion or portions thereof shall be tagged with a unique identifier that links the specimen with all information associated with its collection.
- 4.10.3 After all investigative needs of the NGPC Mountain Lion Work Group have been met and any potentially associated criminal cases are closed, the carcass will either be retained by NGPC for Agency purposes or provided to one of the following, in order of preference:
- A. University of Nebraska State Museum
 - B. Another accredited museum
 - C. Research facility/institution after receipt of a legitimate scientific research proposal
 - D. Educational facility after receipt of a legitimate educational use proposal
 - E. Other Entity after receipt of a legitimate proposal for scientific or educational use.
- 4.10.4 Any allocation of a mountain lion carcass or portions thereof shall be reviewed and approved by the NGPC Mountain Lion Work Group.
- 4.10.5 Allocation of a mountain lion carcass or portions thereof to an entity, other than an accredited museum, shall be on a loan basis, and specimens shall remain property of NGPC.
- 4.10.6 Any approved recipient of a mountain lion carcass or portions thereof, shall complete, sign and return the Specimen Loan Information Form (Appendix D) to the NGPC Furbearer Program Manager upon receipt of a mountain lion carcass or portions thereof.
- 4.10.7 Any approved recipient shall be responsible for properly maintaining the carcass and portions thereof and, with the exception of accredited museums, shall immediately return the carcass or portions thereof to NGPC if so requested by NGPC.
- 4.10.8 Manipulation of a mountain lion carcass or portions thereof by an approved recipient, with the exception of accredited museums, is subject to approval by the NGPC Mountain Lion Work Group.

This document was last revised on March 23, 2004. It will be updated when changes in federal and state regulations, species status and other policies and newly acquired information pertaining to mountain lions make revisions necessary.

Appendix A: Mountain Lion Field Investigation Protocol and Checklist

NGPC Mountain Lion Field Investigation Protocol and Check List

Instructions:

This protocol provides general guidelines/suggestions for conducting field investigations related to suspected mountain lion occurrences. The document also serves as a checklist to keep track of tasks to be completed. These tasks will depend on the specific circumstances and the goal of the investigation (e.g. confirm visual observation vs. confirm livestock depredation).

Recommended Supplies for Field Investigations

Notebook
NGPC Mountain Lion Occurrence Report Form
Forensic ruler, tape measure
Camera (preferably digital)
GPS unit
Evidence tags (business cards will also work)
Plastic bags of various sizes
Paper envelopes/bags
Rubber gloves
Disinfectant (waterless)
Cooler with ice
Waterproof markers
Flagging
Tape recorder

Evidence Tags:

All evidence should be accompanied by a completed NGPC Mountain Lion Occurrence Report Form (Parts 1 and 2). In addition, each piece of evidence (including photos) shall be labeled or marked with the following information (minimum):

- Investigator's Name and Phone Number:
- Date collected
- Location: (e.g. 3 miles N & 2 miles W of Alliance)
- Type of evidence: (e.g. photo of suspected mountain lion track)

Dos

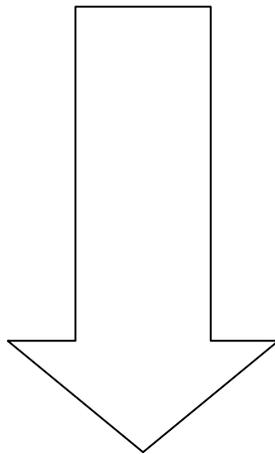
1. Use rubber gloves when handling animals, animal parts, excrements or other potentially contaminated materials.
2. Disinfect skin after coming in contact with any potentially contaminated materials.
3. Handle livestock and pets carefully, especially if injured. Ask owner for permission prior to handling.
4. Include a ruler into all photo documentation of sign/evidence.

Don'ts

1. Do not manipulate, move/remove any potential evidence until its position has been documented (e.g. photographed in context of its location) and the site of the occurrence inspected.
2. Do not stick anything (probe) into puncture wounds.
3. Do not make statements about suspected results of the investigation until it has been completed and all evidence thoroughly evaluated.
4. Do not enter private property without prior authorization.

General Guidelines for Investigating the Scene of a Potential Mountain Lion Occurrence

1. Interview:
 - Observer
2. Complete:
 - Part 1 and 2 of NGPC Mountain Lion Occurrence Report Form
3. Locate:
 - Site of potential occurrence
4. Secure (prevent disturbance):
 - Site of potential occurrence
 - Potential evidence on and off site
5. Document (take notes and photographs – include ruler):
 - Location
 - Vegetation
 - Topography
 - Distance from buildings, municipal boundaries, livestock operations, roads, etc.
 - Potential sign/evidence of mountain lion and other animal activity
6. Complete:
 - Part 3 of NGPC Mountain Lion Occurrence Report Form
7. Submit to NGPC Furbearer Program Manager:
 - NGPC Mountain Lion Occurrence Report Form (with parts 1,2 and 3 completed)
 - Additional documentations of investigation
 - Evidence that can be used to make a determination



Depending on the type of occurrence under investigation, consult the appropriate text box(es) on the following pages.

Prey Carcass

Document (notes and photograph):

- Number of animals killed
- Species (carcass)
- Age (domestic animals: ask owner)
- Weight
- General body condition
- Health prior to the attack (ask owner or vet)
- Condition of captivity (type of operation)
- Position of carcass
- Live or stillborn
- Carcass covered or not (material, extent)
- Stage of decomposition
- Parts consumed/removed
- Distribution of carcass parts (spread out, etc.)
- Signs of hemorrhage
- Location and description of external wounds
- Broken bones, neck
- Old and recent scars
- Blood on ground
- Blood trail
- Kill/attack site
- Drag marks (length, width)
- Predator sign in the vicinity
- Signs of struggle (broken vegetation, etc.)
- Other injured animals in herd

Consult with:

- Owner (if domestic animal)
- Veterinarian (if a necropsy has been conducted prior to this investigation)

Collect, label and submit to NGPC Furbearer Program Manager:

- Photos of carcass
- Photos of injuries
- Photos of depredation site
- Photos of suspected predator sign
- Carcass and carcass parts (**given that this does not interfere with attempts to capture or document the predator**, and given that external inspection suggests possible mountain lion attack) – refrigerated

Injured Domestic Animal

Document (notes and photograph):

- Number of animals injured
- Species (injured animal)
- Age (domestic animals: ask owner)
- Weight
- General body condition
- Health prior to the attack (ask owner or vet)
- Condition of captivity (type of operation)
- Parts consumed/removed
- Distribution of carcass parts (spread out, etc.)
- Signs of hemorrhage
- Location and description of external wounds
- Broken bones
- Old and recent scars
- Behavior
- Blood on ground
- Blood trail
- Attack site
- Predator sign in the vicinity
- Signs of struggle (broken vegetation, etc.)

Consult:

- Owner
- Veterinarian (if the injured animal has been treated prior to the investigation – e.g. sutures)

Collect, label and submit to NGPC Furbearer Program Manager:

- Photos of injured animal
- Photos of wounds (include ruler)
- Photos of animal operation
- Photos of attack site
- Photos of suspected predator sign

Tracks

Document (notes and photograph):

- Location/position of tracks
- Substrate (mud, sand, snow, etc.)
- Length/direction of trail
- Approximate number of tracks
- Average distance between individual tracks
- Freshness of tracks
- Time since last precipitation

Collect, label and submit to NGPC Furbearer Program Manager:

- Photos of several individual tracks
- Photos of suspected mountain lion trail
- Plaster cast of tracks (optional)
- Photo of habitat

Scrapes

Document (notes and photograph):

- Position of scrapes
- Number of scrapes
- Material in scrape (pine needles, soil, etc.)
- Dimensions (height, length, width)
- Urine scent
- Feces

Collect, label and submit to NGPC Furbearer Program Manager:

- Photos of scrapes
- Photos of habitat

Feces

Document (notes and photograph):

- Position of feces
- Number of feces, distribution (latrine, etc.)
- Shape (segmented, rounded ends, etc.)
- Dimensions (diameter, total length, average segment length)
- Location of feces (under tree, on trail, etc.)
- Visible contents (deer hair, vegetation, etc.)

Collect, label and submit to NGPC Furbearer Program Manager:

- Photos of feces on site
- Photos of habitat
- Feces (dry: paper bag, fresh/moist: plastic bag, freeze)

Hair

Document (notes and photograph):

- Position of hair (fence, trail, etc.)
- Amount of hair
- Length
- Coloration (banded, yellow, etc.)

Collect, label and submit to NGPC Furbearer Program Manager:

- Photos of habitat
- Photos of hair on site
- Hair (in paper bag, as much as possible)

Samples for DNA analysis

(Due to the high cost, DNA analysis will only be conducted if there is a high likelihood that the samples are from a mountain lion)

Document (notes and photograph):

- Type of sample
- Location/position of sample
- Amount of sample
- Condition of sample (fresh, dry, etc.)

Collect, label and submit to NGPC Furbearer Program Manager:

- Photos of habitat
- Photos of sample on site
- Hair (in paper bag, as much as possible, possibly with hair follicles)
- Dry feces (paper bag)
- Fresh (moist) feces (plastic bag, freeze)
- Dry blood (e.g. on vegetation) (paper bag)
- Fresh/wet blood (freeze)
- Bone (freeze)
- Tissue (freeze)

Video/Photo of Suspected Mountain Lion

Document:

- Type of equipment recorded with
- Medium recorded on
- Distance recorded from
- Copy or original recording
- Quality of recording/photograph
- Automated or not automated recording
- Location of recording (may require site visit to confirm)
- Species recorded/photographed
- Adult or Juvenile (spots, no spots)
- Gender
- Markings (artificial or natural)
- Size and weight estimate
- Behavior (foraging, resting, etc.)
- Habitat (vegetation, topography, etc.)
- Duration of recording

Collect, label and submit to NGPC Furbearer Program Manager:

- Original recording/photo (good quality copy if original not available)

Audio Recording of Vocalization

Document:

- Type of equipment recorded with
- Medium recorded on
- Distance recorded from
- Copy or original recording
- Quality of recording
- Automated or not automated recording
- Location of recording
- Duration of recording

Collect, label and submit to NGPC Furbearer Program Manager:

- Original recording (or good quality copy)

Mountain Lion Carcass

Document (notes and photograph):

- Number of animals killed
- Position of carcass
- Age estimate
- Weight
- General body condition
- Stage of decomposition
- Parts consumed/removed
- Distribution of carcass parts (spread out, etc.)
- Signs of hemorrhage
- Location and description of external wounds
- Broken bones
- External parasites
- Old and recent scars
- Condition of claws
- Condition of pads
- Markings (artificial and natural)
- Tags (collar, ear tag, pit tag, etc.)
- Blood on ground
- Blood trail
- Kill/attack site
- Animal or human sign in the vicinity
- Signs of struggle (broken vegetation, etc.)

Collect, label and submit to NGPC Furbearer Program Manager:

- Photos of habitat/location
- Photos of carcass on site
- Carcass (on ice - not frozen unless encountered frozen)

Appendix B: NGPC Mountain Lion Occurrence Report Form

NGPC Mountain Lion Occurrence Report Form

PART 1 Observer Information (only accept reports from the observer)

Observer Name: _____ Phone number: _____

Street Address: _____ City & zip code: _____

Observation Date: _____ Time of Day: _____ Duration of Observation: _____

Type of observation

- Visual
- Sign
- Livestock/Domestic Animal Depredation
- Other

Evidence Inspected Collected Describe

- | Evidence | Inspected | Collected | Describe |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Photo/Video | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Track, Hair, Scat | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prey Carcass/Injury | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

Does Observer want evidence returned to him/her? Yes / No

Location of Occurrence

County: _____ Legal Description/Landowner: _____

Distance and direction from nearest town: _____

Description of site/habitat: _____

Visual aid used None / Binoculars / Spotting Scope / Other _____

Number of animals observed: _____ Distance observed from: _____

Physical description of animal (color, size, markings, tail, etc.) and/or description of sign: _____

Behavior: _____

PART 2 To be completed by Report Taker

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____ Date Report Received: _____

Remarks: _____

PART 3 To be completed by Investigator (may be the same as report taker)

Name: _____ Phone number: _____ Date investigated: _____

Site inspected Yes / No

Preliminary Classification:

- Probable
- Possible
- Unconfirmed
- Not a Mountain Lion

If an investigation was not conducted, explain why:

Description of Investigation:

Description of Findings:

Description of Response:

PART 4 To be Completed by Furbearer Program Manager/Review Committee

Name: _____ Phone number: _____ Date closed: _____

Final Classification:

- Confirmed
- Unconfirmed
- Not a Mountain Lion

Remarks:

Appendix C: Template Letter to Observers

Date

Address

Dear Mr./Ms. _____

This is to inform you that our investigation of the mountain lion occurrence report submitted by you on _____ has resulted in the following classification:

- Confirmed** – Physical evidence exists that, in conjunction with the circumstances of the observation, proves unambiguously that the animal in question is a mountain lion.
- Unconfirmed** – No physical evidence exists or the inspection of physical evidence presented, in conjunction with the circumstances of the observation, is inconclusive. The observation can neither be confirmed nor could it be shown that it was not a mountain lion.
- Not a Mountain lion** – Physical evidence or the circumstances of the observation prove unambiguously that the animal in question is not a mountain lion.

Comments:

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission applies a high degree of scrutiny when categorizing a mountain lion observation – only reports that are accompanied by unambiguous physical evidence will be classified as confirmed. Many reports remain unconfirmed either because of the lack of evidence or because the evidence and/or the circumstances of the observation are inconclusive. Enclosed with this letter you will find a copy of our Nebraska Mountain Lion Brochure. The brochure includes a map of confirmed sightings (as of 2002), track comparisons and biological data. It also includes information about what to do in case of an encounter. Please call me if you have further questions.

Thank you for making your report – mountain lions are a part of Nebraska's natural heritage and confirmed occurrence reports provide an opportunity to learn more about this species. Thank you also for your assistance with this investigation.

Sincerely,

Appendix D: NGPC Specimen Loan Information Form



Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
2200 NORTH 33RD STREET
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA 68503

Specimen Loan Information

Specimen Species: _____

Specimen Tag Number: _____ (Tag needs to be with the specimen at all times.)

Type of Specimen:

- Whole Specimen
- Mount
- Pelt
- Skeleton
- Other _____

Intended Location of Specimen:

Institution _____

Address _____

Person responsible for specimen: _____

Phone number: _____

Signature: _____

Date Received: _____

Appendix E: Relevant Literature

Relevant Literature

- Acorn, R.C. and Dorrance, M.J. 1990. Methods of investigating predation of livestock. Alberta Agriculture. Crop Protection Branch, Edmonton, Alberta.
- Benedict, R.A., H.H. Genoways., and P.W. Freeman. 2000. Shifting distributional patterns of mammals in Nebraska. Transactions of the Nebraska Academy of Sciences. 26:55-84.
- Jones, J.K. Jr.1964. Distribution and Taxonomy of Mammals of Nebraska. University of Kansas Publications. Museum of Natural History. 36:299-302.
- Jones, J.K. Jr. 1962. Early records of some mammals from Nebraska. Bulletin of the University of Nebraska State Museum. 4(6):88-99.
- Jones, J.K. Jr. 1949. The occurrence of the mountain lion in Nebraska. Journal of Mammalogy. 30(3):313.
- Knight, J.E. 1994. Mountain Lions. In "Prevention and Control of Wildlife Damage". UNL, USDA, Great Plains Agricultural Council. Vol.1. c93-c99.
- Linnell, J.D.C., J. Odden, M.E. Smith, R. Aanes, and J.E. Swenson. 1999. Large carnivores that kill livestock: do "problem individuals" really exist? Wildlife Society Bulletin. 27(3)698-705.
- Logan, K.A. and L.L. Irwin. 1985. Mountain lion habitats in the Bighorn Mountains, Wyoming. Wildlife Society Bulletin. 13:257-262.
- Lindzey, F. 1987. In Novak, M., J.A. Baker, M.E. Obbard, and B. Malloch. Wild Furbearer Management and Conservation in North America. 657-668.
- McKinney, B. 1996. A field guide to Texas mountain lions. Wildlife Division, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.
- Wade, D.A. and Browns, J.E. 1984. Procedures for evaluating predation on livestock and wildlife. Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station (Texas A&M University System), US FWS. 42pp.

Appendix F: Contacts

Contacts

Nebraska Game & Parks
Commission:
(Mountain Lion Work Group
members are marked with “→”)

Ted Blume, Law Enforcement Division Administrator
Lincoln, 402-471-4010
tblume@ngpc.state.ne.us

Jim Douglas, Wildlife Division Administrator
Lincoln, 402-471-5411
jdouglas@ngpc.state.ne.us

→Craig Stover, Law Enforcement Assistant Div. Administrator
Lincoln, 402-471-5532
cstover@ngpc.state.ne.us

→Mace Hack, Wildlife Assistant Div. Administrator
Lincoln, 402-471-5434
mhack@ngpc.state.ne.us

→Bruce Morrison, Wildlife Assistant Div. Administrator
Lincoln, 402-471-5430
morrison@ngpc.state.ne.us

→Phil Richmond, I&E Publications Editor
Lincoln, 402-471-5008
richmond@ngpc.state.ne.us

→Richard Bischof, Furbearer Program Manager
Lincoln, 402-471-5174
rbischof@ngpc.state.ne.us

USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services: John Hobbs, Director
Lincoln, 402-434-2340
john.m.hobbs@aphis.usda.gov

In the case that a required contact is not available, the person next highest in that person's chain of command shall serve as the alternative contact. In the case that a division administrator is the required contact, but is not available, the assistant division administrator shall serve as the alternative contact.