

**MOUNTAIN LION MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES
FOR
LION DAU-18
GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS
137, 143, & 144**

Prepared for:
Colorado Division of Wildlife
Southeast Region

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DESCRIPTION OF MANAGEMENT AREA AND HABITAT

Data Analysis Unit (DAU) L-18 is located in extreme southeast Colorado in Baca and Las Animas counties. For harvest quota, game management units (GMUs) 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 129, 130, 132, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, and 147 are combined. L-18 has the 3rd lowest average lion harvest in the state with approximately 2 lions harvested every 3 years for the period 1987-1998 (less than 1% of statewide total). Lion game damage complaints for the same period were also less than 1% of statewide total. There were 4 lion/human conflicts reported for 1997, 9% of the statewide total. However, these 4 reported conflicts in 1997 represent 50% of the game damage reports for the 12-year period 1987-1998, and should not be taken to represent the annual average statewide percent of lion/human conflicts, but rather a year specific occurrence.

Although L-18 covers three GMUs, the actual area of core lion habitat within the DAU is quite limited, occurring mainly in the piñon-juniper canyons of these units. Lions do occasionally appear in all areas of the GMUs, but do not permanently reside throughout them. Lions are mainly carnivorous, but grass and other vegetation can comprise up to 11 % of their diet. The main prey items of mountain lions are deer, elk, and porcupines. Lions do prey on other wildlife species when available such as rabbits and other small game and non-game wildlife. It is doubtful whether lion densities are high enough in this sparse habitat to have a significant impact on other wildlife populations. Elk populations are currently increasing in this region while deer numbers are either holding their own or somewhat reduced. If it were scientifically shown that lion depredation was holding deer populations down, further lion harvest through sport hunting would be recommended. Livestock damage from lions in this area is not highly documented, however it should be given serious consideration when developing lion management plans. This issue has been addressed under the Mammalian Predator Management Policy of the Colorado Wildlife Commission (September 1999) and by CDOW game damage policy.

TOTAL LION HARVEST OBJECTIVE: From 1987 to 1998 this DAU averaged 2 lions harvested every 3 years, with a range of 0-4 per year. During the same period the proportion of females in the harvest averaged 25% (2 lions), and ranged from 0 to 100%. Sport harvest accounted for 62% (8 lions) of the total harvest, while non-sport harvest accounted for 38% (5 lions) and ranged from 0-4 lions killed per year.

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TOTAL HARVEST OBJECTIVE: Harvest objective will be 2 lions/year.

TOTAL LION DAMAGE OBJECTIVE: All lion damage claims for the period 1987-1998 occurred during the 1997-1998 fiscal year. Management of L-18 for lion game damage should be addressed on a case by case basis due to the low lion density and small number of damage claims reported annually. When damage is reported the incident should be investigated by the CDOW as soon as possible after the initial report and specific action taken at that time to remedy the situation. This may involve disposing of the offending lion(s) and for compensation to the owner, depending on the situation.

NUISANCE LION COMPLAINTS: Nuisance lion complaints for L-18 are rare. Most complaints come in the form of a lion sighted by the public, not necessarily of a lion actually being a real nuisance to humans. With this low number of complaints, the individual complaint should be investigated on a case by case basis, as is recommended for game damage situations.