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Response to Colorado Sun Article printed on 10/17/22

The process of building a cooperative landscape is challenging and imperfect at best, as evidenced in the recent article in the Colorado Sun titled “Why the Partnership Between a Colorado Cattle Rancher and a Wolf Advocate Couldn’t Last.” It has been Working Circle’s practice to minimize engaging in media to protect the confidentiality of our rancher partners and to avoid the inevitable misunderstandings that arise from the retelling of emotional, complicated events. However, in this case, we believe it is important to openly address certain issues raised in the article.

Recognizing the value of ranchlands, our mission is to support ranch families directly on the ground through meaningful and trusted collaboration by implementing long-term sustainable approaches that help reduce risks for wolf-livestock conflict and increase ranch economic viability and resiliency. Working Circle relies heavily on our rancher partners in several states who have extensive experience working and living in wolf country to inform our efforts.

Working Circle’s goal is to respond to ranching families experiencing livestock loss due to wolves with the intent to provide short-term tools and offer long-term strategies based on certain stockmanship, herd management, and grazing principles. The support we provide is designed to meet the needs of the individual landowner or manager. One size does not fit all; thus, it is always up to the ranchers to decide if and how to implement conflict risk reduction strategies.

We commended this North Park family’s idea to invite wolf advocates to conduct night watches last February rather than use the professional help we normally offer. The intent of this family was to “reach across the aisle” and promote greater understanding between wolf advocates and the ranching community. The conversations and experiences proved tremendously impactful all around. In this circumstance, Working Circle’s role was to evaluate, train, and organize the volunteers. This was not a perfect scenario. Wolf advocates without prior training are not experienced ranch hands and were unable to implement the additional strategies we recommended. That said, 72 nights were covered with successful outcomes. Once calving season began in mid-April, the increased pasture size, and the inability of volunteers to access much of the calving area diminished the effectiveness of the night cattle watch. By early May, it was jointly agreed to cease the night watches. In June, Working Circle hired a full-time range rider, chosen by the family, to assist on the ranch. No further loss of cattle to wolves was experienced during the summer grazing season. After their grazing season concluded, our work agreement ended.



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Working Circle's goal on every challenge is to present options and opportunities for a ranching family to consider. The hope is to mutually discover approaches that will reduce the risk of future wolf-livestock conflict through practices that support and fit into the goals of a ranch overall, which also reduces the continued outpouring of resources in terms of money, time, and energy. Sustainable solutions are needed for long-term success. We recognize and respect that it is up to each landowner and manager to decide which approaches to explore and include in their ranching plan.

To assist in the development of viable coexistence plans, Working Circle and our rancher partners deploy game cameras to gain a better understanding of the landscape, including movement, interaction, and presence of predators, wild ungulates, and cattle. When used responsibly, lure is helpful in obtaining additional data by pausing passing wildlife in front of the camera. This is a common practice utilized by wildlife conservationists, researchers, students, agencies, and ranchers. Working Circle no longer utilizes lure in Colorado per a regulation instituted early this year.

Working Circle is in it for the long haul, and we remain committed to supporting families experiencing or concerned about the risk of wolf-livestock conflict. This work is not easy, and it is very nuanced. Working Circle continues to partner with other ranch operations in North Park, which have had successful outcomes to date. We have been proudly working with this community since 2019.

We always appreciate the opportunity to discuss our philosophy and work.

Thank you.

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