



Jaguar Conservation Program's

Initial Response Protocol for Problem Felids

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I. Upon receiving a report of a problem cat, the appropriate governmental office begins an incident file, determines if a site visit is warranted, and files the initial report, with a felid advisory group. This advisory group should be comprised of government officials and cat biologists or trained specialists appointed by the government and operating under a memorandum of understanding amongst the members.

II. If a site visit is not deemed appropriate, forestry or wildlife officials generate a letter of response to the complainant, stating why further action was not deemed appropriate in this instance, or outlining the recommendations for addressing the issue of the complaint.

III. If a site visit is judged to be warranted, at least one government official and one cat biologist or trained specialist from the felid advisory board visit the site of the reported incident. They interview the parties who initiated the report, and others who may be relevant to the incident. The parties involved in the incident are informed about the procedure for investigating and resolving problem cat incidents. They are also advised as to their right and responsibilities concerning the animal in question.

IV. At the conclusion of the initial site visit, the investigative team will generate a standardized incident report which will try to determine the following:

- a) Did the reported event (or events) definitely involve a big cat?
- b) Was the reported problem a single incident or part of a series of incidents that may involve an habitual offender?
- c) What appear to be the proximate and secondary causes of the incident(s)?
- d) What felid species is involved? Does the evidence suggest any other specific data about the cat, such as the size, sex, and presence of injuries or anomalies to the body?
- e) What are the recommendations for immediate and/or long term courses of action?

V. The report is then circulated among advisor group members and a course of action is then initiated through the appropriate governmental authority. If no problem is determined to exist and/or no action is to be taken, the village is notified of the advisory board's decision, and reminded of their rights and responsibilities. If a problem is determined to exist and action is recommended, then steps should be taken immediately to address the problem. Recommended courses of action would include, but not be limited to, one or a combination of the following activities:

- 1) **Mitigation measures**- recommendations whereby a problem can be resolved in the short and/or long term through changes in human behavior and husbandry practices. Examples might include such things as the penning of young livestock overnight,

fencing areas between forest and open rangeland, penning and/or moving pregnant females close to the village or ranch house and restricting the movements or placement of dogs, pigs, chickens, and other domestic stock.

- 2) **Compensation-** reimbursing villagers for confirmed losses to problem felids or contributions made towards mitigation measures to alleviate problems. Funds may also be provided to individuals showing responsible conservation management of their land and livestock. Funds for these courses of action should exist in a dedicated fund generated and sustained through things such as tourism and protected area revenues. Such funds may be initiated or supplemented by non-governmental organizations interested in cat conservation. Any compensation scheme should be managed and overseen carefully, and should involve incentives towards mitigating future problems.
- 3) **Removal of problem animals-** if problems continue after all reasonable efforts are made to reduce or eliminate the contributing human factors to a conflict situation, steps may have to be taken to remove the particular problem cat. In this situation, all efforts must be made to minimize the chances of capturing a non-offending animal. Initial attempts at removal of the problem animal should involve trapping at the site of a reported depredation event. Before attempting to capture the animal, the options for its disposition should be clear. This will determine which removal technique might be employed. If capture at the site of a depredation event is not possible, extreme care should be taken to identify the problem animal. This may be accomplished through examination of livestock kills, camera traps, and possibly tracking from the site of depredation events. Removal of problem animals should be carried out by qualified government staff or with the oversight of government officials. Removal should never be left in the hands of private individuals or landowners.

VI. Disposition of problem animals is at the discretion of the government authority, and can include euthanasia or when appropriate, placement in accredited captive conservation institutions. We recommend that such institutions either be accredited by the AZA, EAZA, or WAZA or attain the standards of captive animal care mandated by these organizations and are inspected by an appropriate member of one of these groups.

We do not recommend the capture of wild animals, problematic or otherwise, which are then released or sold to private individuals, commercial interests, or to private or non-accredited zoos or other captive facilities.