Lions and Livestock Losses
Unlike wild animals, most livestock do not have the skills to protect themselves. Thousands of years of breeding make domestic animals dependent on people for protection. In the United States, livestock owners have traditionally turned to government agencies to kill wildlife which threatens livestock production. However, statistics show that even when lions are killed on a property year after year, livestock losses still continue.

Young or inexperienced lions that are more likely to prey on livestock may move into vacant territories and continue the cycle of killing and being killed. Older lions are skilled in taking their preferred wild prey and, as a result, livestock kills are less likely to occur. Some ranchers say that the best protection they have from mountain lions is to have an old experienced male lion established on the ranch.

Killing a lion for preying on livestock does not reverse or compensate the livestock loss, does not prevent future losses and costs taxpayer dollars for the kill. Even completely eliminating lions from a geographic region will not prevent depredation. If there are no lions to live in the territory, other predators, particularly coyotes, will fill the space.

Mountain Lion Facts
Mountain lions are calm, quiet, and elusive. As opportunistic hunters, mountain lions eat prey that is familiar and easily available, hunting alone from dusk to dawn, taking their prey from behind.

A mountain lion may kill a deer every one to four weeks. They often drag their kill to another area and then cover it with dry leaves, grass or pine needles, to protect it from other animals and to reduce spoilage. A lion can be expected to return to the kill several times to feed.

Mountain lions prefer areas with very dense undergrowth and cover. The home territory of a lion can encompass hundreds of square miles.

Although lions are solitary unless mating or a mother with her young, territories often overlap those of the opposite sex, and only occasionally those of the same sex.

While many people believe that populations of mountain lions are increasing, and that fewer lions are being killed than ever before, scientific research does not bear this out. There are simply no factors that would lead to an increase in their numbers today. Mountain lion habitat continues to disappear and what land is left is fragmented and degraded. With higher human populations more lions are killed by cars and for conflicts. And hunting and poaching has increased to far surpass the number of lions taken each year during the bounty period. There is no guarantee that lions will be in the United States for future generations.
There are simple and cost effective ways to avoid the loss of pets and livestock to mountain lions.

These methods will also keep your family and neighbors safer.

Keep Your Pets Safe
Cats and dogs are easy prey. Keep your pets indoors or secure them in a covered run.
If you allow your pets to roam, keep in mind that you are risking their lives, just as city-dwellers take a risk in letting their pets play near a busy street.

Do Not Feed Wildlife
Feeding wildlife such as deer, opossums, or raccoons attracts predators to your home and creates a safety risk. Make sure that food set out for pets, livestock or birds is accessible only to the animals that you are trying to feed.
Fence in vegetable and fruit gardens that might attract wildlife. Landscape your yard with plants that deer do not like to eat.

Install Frightening Devices
Mountain lions depend on surprise to catch their prey. Installing either motion or timer-activated outdoor lighting around your home and animal enclosures may help keep lions away. You might also try loud noises, sprinklers, or other frightening devices, such as those used to keep birds out of fields.

Use Guard Animals
Guard dogs that are specifically bred to protect livestock from predators have been used for thousands of years in parts of Europe. Studies conducted in Colorado, Montana, Utah and Idaho show that properly trained livestock guard dogs reduced predation by as much as 93 percent.
Guard dogs are not pets and must be specially raised and trained in order to be effective. They may also pose a risk to people and are best suited to large herds in remote locations.
Guard animals such as llamas and donkeys are more effective against coyotes than lions. Horned cattle are also being used in some ranching operations to deter predators.
Lions scavenge, and many losses attributed to them are truthfully due to other causes.

Build Livestock Enclosures
The best protective measure is to secure livestock in fully enclosed barns, pens, or sheds. Openings such as windows and doors might provide access for highly curious lions. There are detailed pen plans on the Mountain Lion Foundation website.
If covering your pen is not an option then you must build a tall fence. Fences should be at least 12 feet high, constructed of either heavy woven wire or alternating hot and grounded electric wires. Adding a wire mesh overhang or an electric wire of at least 5,000 volts at the top of the fence may prevent lions from climbing over.
Be sure to place all livestock enclosures away from any trees or brush that lions might climb over or hide.

Protect Vulnerable Animals
Lions are attracted by the smell of blood, so keep injured animals or livestock nearing and following birth in fully enclosed structures.
Immediately remove and destroy afterbirth, carcasses, and other animal by-products from areas near livestock enclosures or homes.

More information about protecting livestock, pets and people can be found at www.mountainlion.org

Research shows killing a lion may actually increase local conflicts, as several transient lions will move in to fill the space.
Mature lions are very good at avoiding people and staying out of trouble. Keeping them alive is the best way to for us to coexist with wildlife.