

Rancher Welfare

I was definitely out-gunned at the 7-23-2026 Grant County Commission meeting. I did not come looking for a hand-out, but some were, and they left with a hand-out of \$82,372 in ranching welfare.

This was my ten year anniversary of speaking up for wildlife in front of our commission on the secretive Wildlife Services. And what did taxpayers get for \$750,000 spent over those years?

This year's two quarterly reports show eight rock squirrels shot and gophers killed. That's it for \$93,604 for only 130 hours of work or \$720 per hour cost. Commissioners and taxpayers are getting ripped off by this no-bid contract. Public funding for private profit.

Last year commissioners requested better accountability in the quarterly reports, but this year there were only two pages of boiler plate, a six month, one page report that cost taxpayers \$46,802. Previously quarterly reports were five to six pages with some detail.

In ten years of speaking up for wildlife we got non-lethal relocation, got rid of M-44s and got rid of a double dipping agent. But two years ago M-44s were written back into the contract with no discussion and no vote, just written in. These M-44s are an imminent threat to human health and our pets' safety, and they are illegal under the 2021 Roxy's Law that bans their use.

It has been tough getting the new contract and quarterly reports through IPRA, or our county's version of the Freedom of Information Act. I have been continually denied this public information since requesting the contract June 8. Transparency should not be an inconvenience to the county, it is essential to have an open government. I received the new contract when it was made available to everyone on Monday the 19th, and the third of four quarterly reports after the commission voted unanimously for the rancher handout.

The funds can legally be used for county road repairs where all the public will benefit, not just the few ranchers and Freeport ranching leasees. County taxpayers covered the ranchers' mandated match last year paying an additional \$8,000 for ranchers. This year we are paying \$13,600. Is it even legal using public funds for private gain? Beef prices are at a record high.

Luna County's Wildlife Services' contract is much less at \$65,000, but commissioners still voted to give Wildlife Services a blank check again. One ranching commissioner did not recuse himself. He owes taxpayers that much.

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