

# Around Wyoming

## POACHING: A CRIME AGAINST WILDLIFE AND WYOMING'S CITIZENS

**HAVE YOU EVER WATCHED A CRIME-SOLVING SHOW ON TELEVISION LIKE CSI OR BONES?**

Those programs focus on how police use science to help solve crimes. But did you know that Wyoming has its own team of professionals that help solve crimes against wildlife?

Poaching is the term used when someone kills wildlife illegally. A poacher might have committed a crime by hunting without a license, shooting the wrong species, hunting in the wrong area, or leaving meat to rot. Wardens, wildlife investigators, and scientists at the Wyoming Game and Fish Department Laboratory in Laramie work together to catch poachers that harm Wyoming's wildlife.

Catching a poacher usually begins with an investigation in the field. When wardens or wildlife investigators suspect a crime has been committed, they will go to the scene to collect clues and evidence like blood, hair, antlers, or other items. Then, the samples are sent to the Game and Fish lab where scientists get more information, like DNA, which can match a blood sample to an animal carcass.

While the lab tests evidence, wardens and investigators keep searching for clues. They may interview witnesses for more information.

They may talk to a suspect who is believed to have committed the crime.

Wardens can also get special documents from the courts, called search warrants, which allow

law enforcement to search a person's home or car for evidence. Many times, investigators work with local police, sheriffs, and attorneys to solve a case. Then, all the hard work done by the team is put together to bring charges against the suspect. Once the suspect is proven guilty by a judge, they are sentenced for their crime.

One case Game and Fish solved involved a man from Casper. A Wyoming game warden received information that an abandoned truck

involved in a traffic accident had a lot of blood and deer hair in its bed. The warden and other officers searched the suspect's home and found deer meat in the freezer, several sets of deer antlers and pronghorn horns in the garage, and deer and pronghorn carcasses hidden on the property. Evidence was sent to the Game and Fish lab. The man did have legal hunting licenses for two of the deer found, but not the others. The man was charged

and convicted (found guilty) of killing antlered big game animals without a license and during a closed season. He was also charged with shooting a big game animal from a vehicle and for shooting and killing wildlife from a highway. All of those things are against the law. The suspect had to pay \$30,000 in fines and fees. He had to forfeit his rifle used to poach the mule deer. In addition, he lost all his trapping and hunting privileges for 10 years and cannot even go hunting with friends or family during that time.

Poaching is a serious crime. People that poach take away an opportunity from a legal hunter to harvest that animal or from you and I to enjoy that animal in the wild. The employees of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department will continue to work together to catch these criminals and protect all of Wyoming's wildlife.

# CSI:

**CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION  
POACHING: A CRIME AGAINST  
WILDLIFE & WYOMING'S CITIZENS**

