

Wildlife officials order 4 mountain lions killed in El Dorado County

By David Bienick, KCRA-TV

RESCUE – Wildlife advocates said Monday that state officials should have considered alternatives after learning they ordered a mother mountain lion and her three offspring to be shot and killed in El Dorado County.

The killings happened last month in the community of Rescue, which is about three miles north of Shingle Springs.

The California Department of Fish and Game said it had received several complaints about the mountain lions and confirmed that at least one domestic goat had been killed by a mountain lion.

Jason Holley, a supervising wildlife biologist for the department, told KCRA 3 it was not clear if all four mountain lions had participated in the kill.

“That may or may not be true, about all four animals killing the animal that was confirmed dead. But what is very likely is that they all fed off of it, and they were all of huntable age, and they could all be killing animals in the area,” Holley said.

Holley said the young mountain lions were about 18 months old – an age at which he said they often leave the protection of their mother.

“Some of these cubs, or sub-adults, looked like they were 60 pounds,” Holley said.

Holley said the department had received a complaint from the

owner of a goat herd in the area. He declined to identify the owner.

Holley said the state contacted an agent for the United States Department of Agriculture who confirmed that one of the owner's goats had been killed by the mountain lions.

Holley said in such cases, state law requires that a permit to kill the animals be issued.

However, the Mountain Lion Foundation, a nonprofit organization based in Sacramento, questioned the decision.

Executive Director Tim Dunbar said the goat owner should have done more to protect his herd.

Dunbar said even if the mother mountain lion had to be killed, the others could have been sent to zoos or wildlife preserves.

"Just off the top of my head, I would say there are 20 or so that are on a waiting list now, that would want to have a cub," Dunbar said.

He also said in such cases, California should attempt to relocate young mountain lions to other parts of the state.

He said the state of Washington has been successfully doing so for the past two years.

Holley said California officials will attempt to place cubs younger than 4 months.