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## WILDLIFE SERVICES—KENTUCKY

### Contact Information:

*Brett Dunlap, Kentucky and Tennessee Wildlife Services State Director*

*537 Myatt Drive, Madison, TN 37115*

*Phone: (615) 736-5506 FAX: (615) 736-2768*

*Toll-Free Number: 1-866-4USDAWS 1-866-487-3297*

*E-mail: [brett.g.dunlap@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:brett.g.dunlap@aphis.usda.gov)*

*Web site: [www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage)*

### USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Kentucky

Every day, residents, industries, organizations and agencies call on Kentucky Wildlife Services (WS) for help in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, natural resources, and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. WS' professional wildlife biologists respond to these requests with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

Kentucky, rich and abundant in natural resources, is home to a mix of urban and suburban settings, rural environments, forests, and agricultural lands. This ecological variety gives the State a remarkable diversity of wildlife species. Kentucky WS works with Federal and state officials, industry, and individuals to protect property, agricultural and natural resources, and the quality of life for residents of Kentucky. The program also protects people, pets, and livestock from

wildlife-borne diseases; guards natural resources, such as watersheds and timber, from beaver damage; and educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. Specific projects conducted by Kentucky WS include managing roosting blackbird and starling damages in urban and suburban areas; conducting sampling and monitoring for chronic wasting disease (CWD), avian influenza (AI), and rabies; protecting watersheds, roadways, crops, and timber from beaver damage; protecting property, recreational areas, and human health from Canada goose damage; protecting aviation and human health and safety from wildlife strikes, and managing damage caused by vultures, pigeons, starlings, and other wildlife.

### Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

#### Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports

— Every year lives are endangered and dollars are wasted when wildlife damage aircraft. Bird strikes with aircraft cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$550 million annually and pose devastating hazards to passengers and flight crews. Located along the Mississippi and Atlantic flyways for migratory waterfowl, Kentucky also contains one of the country's busiest airports, with more than 13.5 million passengers annually. From 1990-2006, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reported more than 1,750



wildlife strikes at Kentucky airports. The FAA estimates, however, that only about 20% of all actual strikes are reported.

WS biologists are working with airport officials at all major and regional airports in Kentucky to manage wildlife populations on and around airfields. Strike rates caused by wildlife have been reduced significantly through habitat modification and WS enhanced wildlife damage management programs directed at several species including waterfowl, raptors, and blackbirds.

WS is recognized internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) continually conducts research to understand the nature of wildlife hazards at airports and to develop management tools that reduce these hazards. WS provides on-site evaluations, comprehensive wildlife hazard assessments, and airport expansion and design consultations to minimize threats and it trains airport personnel to reduce the risk of wildlife/aircraft collisions.

#### Addressing Residential and Industrial Property Damage Caused by Roosting Blackbirds

— European starlings, red-winged blackbirds, brown-headed cowbirds, and grackles congregate in large night-time winter roosts often containing thousands of birds. Most roosts are located in urban, industrial and residential areas on utility structures and trees. Blackbird problems are the most

#### Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting public safety and property from Canada goose, pigeon, starling, blackbird, and other wildlife damage
- Protecting civil and military aviation from wildlife strikes
- Managing damage caused by beavers to natural resources, timber, agriculture, and transportation infrastructure
- Protecting municipal utility structures, residential property, and livestock from vultures
- Protecting public safety from wildlife diseases

#### Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Kentucky:

- Improving damage management methods for aquatic rodents
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Reducing Canada goose damages through translocation
- Managing problems caused by starlings, blackbirds, and vultures
- Managing wildlife transmission of rabies
- Improving assessment, sampling, and economic methods for wildlife damage management

common complaint received by Kentucky WS and not just due to the noise nuisance. Property damage and human health concerns are caused by accumulation of droppings on landscaping, vehicles, houses, plants, and sidewalks. Bird droppings are corrosive to paints, metals, and other building materials, and pose health hazards to workers and the public. For example, large roost may create environmental conditions conducive to the development of a fungal disease called histoplasmosis, which can be transmitted to people and can cause severe respiratory problems. Kentucky WS assists dozens of cities, industries and residential communities annually by dispersing roosts with pyrotechnics and assisting property owners in vegetation and habitat management. WS also provides bird harassment equipment and technical support.

**Addressing Residential Property Damage from Canada Geese**—Canada geese problems represent the second most common wildlife complaint received by Kentucky WS: the birds frequently reside in residential areas, are non-migratory, and remain throughout the year. Concerns include feces-contaminated water, accumulations of droppings on sidewalks, beaches and golf courses, and aggressive geese that bite or attack children and the elderly. The majority of these geese live in urban and suburban areas adjacent to schools, parks, and residential areas, benefiting from an abundant food supply, water, and few predators. In addition to providing technical assistance and public educational programs, WS removes problem geese that cause property damage, jeopardize water quality, and threaten public safety. WS removes about 500 resident Canada geese from golf courses, residential communities, and recreational areas each year in Kentucky.

**Protecting Multiple Resources from Beaver Damage**—WS provides direct assistance

**Major Cooperators:**

- U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
- Tennessee Valley Authority
- Fort Campbell
- Louisville International Airport
- Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport
- Toyota
- Louisville Gas and Electric
- United Parcel Service
- KY Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Resources

throughout Kentucky to remove beavers that damage timber, agricultural crops, natural resources, roadways, culverts, sanitation lines, and property. Flooding due to beaver dams causes the majority of damage, however gnawing and cutting of ornamental trees and shrubs also creates concerns around parks and lakefront properties. Historically, beaver represented a valuable economic and natural resource. In recent years, however, little demand for beaver products led to a decrease in trapping and subsequent increase in beaver numbers. Beaver now occupy nearly all State watersheds, and State-wide population trend estimates are increasing.

To address many of these problems, Kentucky WS enters into cooperative relationships with Federal, state, city and county governments, soil and water conservation districts, private landholders, and others with beaver problems, with funding from State, county, Federal, and private sources. Kentucky WS assists on a variety of properties, using an Integrated Management approach that includes water level manipulation, exclusion, population reduction, and the safe and effective use of explosives by certified WS personnel. On average, over \$1 million per year in losses are prevented to timber, agricultural crops, and property due to the Kentucky WS’ beaver damage management program.

**Looking to the Future**

Human health and safety, urban wildlife and beaver damage are concerns for Kentucky wildlife managers, especially aviation safety. Increased travel through Kentucky airports, combined with population and range increases of numerous species of birds and wildlife, has created a greater need for airport managers to deal with threats posed by wildlife. Additional attention must be given to this specialized work.

A second issue related to property damage and economic loss involves the increased need for beaver damage management throughout Kentucky due to rapidly growing beaver populations. Damages to timber, roadways, drainage structures, property, and flooding concerns caused by beavers have increased the public’s awareness of these issues. Expanding habitat and the lack of recreational trapping have contributed to these damages.

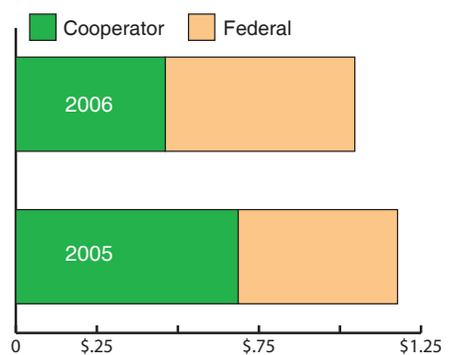
Coupled with rising populations of waterfowl, white-tailed deer, coyote, skunk, beaver, and raccoon, the increased urbanization and expansion into formerly rural areas has increased wildlife conflicts with people. Other urban conflicts involve threats to human health and safety and damage to homes, buildings, lawns, utility structures, and property from vultures, woodpeckers, Canada geese, and skunks.

The State also has needs to manage the transmission and spread of raccoon rabies. Kentucky WS is currently participating in WS’ national effort to prevent the westward spread of raccoon rabies, and, hopefully, to eliminate rabies from the United States.

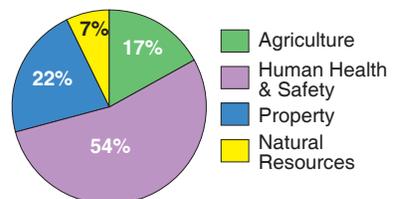
**Kentucky Wildlife Services Funding**

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators with a vested interest in the program: producers, private individuals, businesses, and other Federal, State, and local government agencies. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

**Total Funding (Millions)**



**Resources Protected % of Total Funds**



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