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WILDLIFE SERVICES—MICHIGAN

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Michigan

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

The efforts of the Michigan WS program reflect the diversity of wildlife in the State. Michigan WS works to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation, prevent wolf conflicts with livestock, resolve starling damage at dairies, halt the spread of bovine tuberculosis, and protect human health at industrial facilities.



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.

Eradicating Bovine Tuberculosis (TB)—A disease of cattle, bison, goats, and cervids (hoofed deer and elk), bovine TB has made a serious economic impact on the state's livestock industry. Michigan lost its bovine TB-free status after the disease was detected in the State's cattle and free-ranging deer. The projected impact of the disease on the State's producers is estimated at \$121 million over 10 years.

WS is assisting livestock producers in preventing the infection from passing

between livestock and wildlife, primarily deer. Fencing has been provided to livestock producers in an attempt to develop enclosures, which are both effective and practical in excluding deer from feed storage sites. When the disease was identified in a captive cervid hunting facility, WS conducted efficient and humane depopulation. To assist field personnel, WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), is trying to better understand how livestock and deer interact. WS scientists are also researching ways to detect bovine TB in wildlife and improve barriers between livestock and deer.

Managing Wolf Conflicts—For the past decade, the gray wolf has been categorized and managed as a federally listed species. During that time, wolf populations expanded across the Upper Peninsula by more than 20% each year. As wolf numbers increase, so will conflicts between livestock producers and wolves, whether "delisted" or "endangered". Critical to the successful coexistence of people and wolves is the prompt and effective response to incidents of wolf depredation on livestock. This effort to manage wolves is part of a cooperative program between the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and WS.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Assisting Federal and State agencies to eradicate bovine TB
- Reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Reducing starling damage at dairies and feedlots
- Reducing damage by cormorants to natural resources
- Managing wolf conflicts with humans and livestock

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Michigan:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Reducing blackbird damage to feedlots
- Managing bird predation to aquaculture
- Managing predators through new methods to protect livestock and wildlife
- Controlling wildlife vectors of rabies and bovine TB

The program has expanded to provide two full-time WS specialists to investigate suspected incidents of predation and determine whether wolves are involved. If a link has been established, the specialist can take appropriate action such as trapping the responsible wolves. Other activities include trapping wolves so they can be radio-collared and helping to establish an accurate count of wolves in the State. When appropriate and approved by Federal and State wolf program managers, WS has removed wolves for immediate human-safety reasons.

Reducing Starling Damage at Dairies—In the winter, starlings congregate, sometimes in very large numbers, at dairies and feedlots for food and shelter. Damage occurs as the birds consume and contaminate cattle feed, which in turn reduces the milk production. Also, starlings are thought to be responsible for the spread of salmonella. Michigan WS conducts a starling damage management program, which is effective, selective, and environmentally safe. This successful starling-control program has expanded over the past five years as producers call on WS for assistance.

Enhancing Aviation Safety—Wildlife collisions with airplanes cost civil aviation more than \$550 million annually in the United States and pose a hazard to flight crews, passengers and aircraft. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has recognized this threat to air safety and elicited the expertise of WS. NWRC scientists conduct research from the Center’s Sandusky, OH field station to reduce hazards to aviation and risks to the public. Studies are underway at several large airports where scientists evaluate habitat management practices and wildlife

Major Cooperators:

- Michigan Department of Agriculture
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- Michigan Department of Community health
- USDA-APHIS-Veterinary Services
- Detroit Metro Airport
- Other regional and international airports
- Private utilities firms
- Major industrial firms

dispersal techniques. WS also maintains the National Wildlife Strike Database used by the FAA and airports to monitor trends and wildlife species that pose the greatest concern to aviation.

WS supports approximately 40 civilian and military airports, primarily by providing technical assistance, or information on management alternatives and assistance in obtaining depredation permits. Direct management can be provided. Since 2001, WS has conducted year-long wildlife hazard assessments at 13 Michigan airports.

Reducing damage by double-crested cormorants—Double-crested cormorants have increased dramatically in the Great Lakes in the last 25 years, in some cases resulting in unacceptably high levels of damage to public resources like sportfish. Since 2004, Michigan WS partnered with the Michigan Department of Natural Resource and several Tribes to implement new authority to manage cormorants issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at several sites. Although too early for promises, evidence suggests control is having a beneficial effect.

Wildlife Diseases—Michigan is one of 23 states in the WS’ Wildlife Disease Program, staffed with a fulltime Wildlife Disease Biologist who works with State and Federal agencies on relevant in-state disease issues. The disease biologist also deals with wildlife disease issues on a national scale, being deployed to other states to assist their natural resource management agencies with various wildlife disease surveillance protocols. The emergency response component of the Wildlife Disease Program adds another dimension to Wildlife Services, providing highly trained professionals to address emergencies surrounding national and international wildlife disease outbreaks and natural disasters. WS joined the national surveillance effort for highly pathogenic avian influenza in 2006. WS and its cooperating local agencies collected hundreds of samples from live and hunter-harvest birds and from the environment, part of an early detection effort for a disease that could impact both human health and the domestic poultry industry.

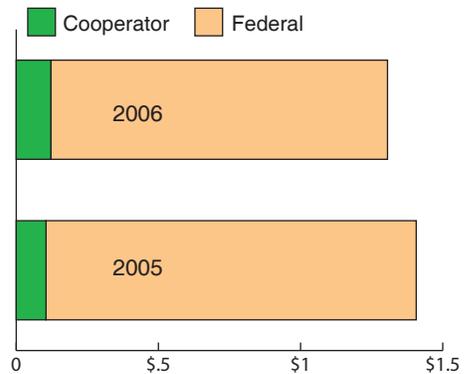
Looking to the Future

Feral pigs have expanded across the country and are now identified in many areas of Michigan. This invasive, or non-native species, represents a risk to agriculture because they damage crops and pose a threat to livestock by carrying diseases such as pseudorabies. They are threats to natural resources because they prey upon wildlife, compete for limited food resources, and damage habitat such as wetlands. Many reasons can be raised for Michigan to not want feral pigs to get established here. Feral pigs, however, are very adaptable and highly prolific; eradication efforts will be difficult. Wildlife Services can be a major contributor to intervention strategies.

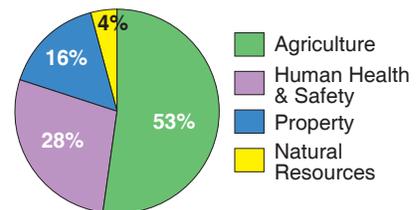
Michigan Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators who have 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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