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WILDLIFE SERVICES—CONNECTICUT

Contact Information:

Monte Chandler, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island
Wildlife Services State Director

463 West Street, Amherst, MA 01002

Phone: (413) 253-2403 FAX: (413) 253-7577

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

E-mail: monte.d.chandler@aphis.usda.gov

Web site: www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage

USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Connecticut

Connecticut enjoys a broad economic base across well-developed urban and suburban social structures with varying technological, educational, industrial, agricultural, and natural resources. Although many urban and suburban areas are well developed, Connecticut has a remarkably diverse and growing wildlife population, which means increased opportunities for conflicts with the public. Every day, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call upon Wildlife Services (WS) Connecticut for help and expertise in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, property, and natural resources from damage or threats caused by wildlife. In response WS provides technical

assistance and implements direct wildlife damage management efforts, which are biologically, environmentally, and socially sound, in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

WS provides assistance to agricultural producers including dairy and vegetable farmers to prevent damage caused by Canada geese and blackbirds. WS assists the public to protect property and human health and safety from damage or threats caused by gulls, pigeons, woodpeckers, and other animals. WS personnel provide recommendations to help reduce potential contamination of drinking water caused by bacteria from goose and gull feces. To protect the safety of air travelers, WS helps reduce hazards associated with wildlife at airports. WS biologists also help alleviate predation and damage to State and Federally protected shorebirds caused by other birds and mammals.

Connecticut's WS program also provides assistance to resolve various other wildlife conflicts such as property damage caused by nesting monk parakeets, an invasive, or non-native, species. These social birds may establish colonies in which massive nests engulf the "T-frame" of power utility poles. Sometimes the monk parakeet nests cause power outages and potential threats to human safety. As a federal program, the WS Connecticut program must also conduct its efforts with respect to management of populations and damaging impacts caused by invasive non-native species as prescribed under the Presidential Executive Order 13112. While the monk parakeet is an invasive species, its soft lush green color and vocal clicks and shrieks no doubt increase the level of appeal to human social environments and subsequently challenge the application of available limited damage management strategies. Efforts conducted by WS research personnel are currently examining additional methods and strategies of monk parakeet damage management.



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 may also provide cooperative on-site help, or *direct assistance*, to address complex wildlife problems that may be difficult or cannot be safely and effectively 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 Agricultural Resources—Despite high human population densities, agriculture remains economically and socially important to Connecticut. WS provides wildlife damage management expertise to a highly diversified agricultural industry: vegetable, fruit, dairy, turf, ornamental, aquaculture, and livestock production enterprises. These operations occur in urban, suburban, and rural settings, and produce both locally consumed and exported crops.

WS personnel conduct seasonal projects in collaboration with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection to manage starling

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting civilian and military aircraft and passengers from wildlife collisions
- Alleviating damage, human health and safety, or other conflicts caused by Canada geese
- Reducing damage caused by pigeons, starlings, blackbirds, and gulls
- Reducing potential wildlife disease transmission to livestock and contamination feed
- Alleviating depredation of State and Federally protected shorebirds

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Connecticut:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Evaluating potential threats and hazards caused by the presence of snow buntings or similar birds at airports
- Refining urban Canada goose integrated management methods including capture strategies
- Evaluating waterfowl as disease, parasite, and noxious weed reservoirs
- Developing new methods or strategies for managing avian predators to protected shorebirds

contamination of feed and water at dairy farms, which can cause salmonella infections in cattle. Cattle infected with salmonella may abort their calves, slow down or stop feeding, lose weight, and reduce milk production. Dairy and feedlot farmers who participate in this WS starling-control program report improvements in the quality of their cattle and milk production and cost savings because cattle feed is not contaminated or eaten by starlings.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—Wildlife collisions with airplanes cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$550 million annually and pose a hazard to passengers and aircraft. WS provides training, wildlife hazard assessments, and direct wildlife hazard management assistance at Connecticut airports through partnerships with Federal and State agencies and airport management. In fiscal year (FY) 2006, WS conducted operational wildlife damage management projects at five state airports and provided technical assistance to eight airport facilities. WS provides at least two wildlife hazard management workshops for Connecticut airport personnel each year. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts research on habitat management practices and wildlife dispersal techniques. NWRC also maintains the National Wildlife Strike Database used by the Federal Aviation Administration and airports to monitor trends and wildlife species that pose the greatest concern to aviation. WS in Connecticut uses the information and technology developed from field research and the strike data base to enhance development of wildlife hazard management strategies and methods for application at local airports.

Wildlife Disease Management—To enhance preparedness for emergency disease response the WS continues to collaborate with USDA-Veterinary Services (VS) and several State and local health agencies. Interagency meetings have been conducted, which have significantly

improved communications and strategies for responding to potential disease emergencies.

Avian influenza (AI), the bird flu, is caused by a virus that infects domestic poultry and wild birds (geese, ducks and shorebirds). As with human flu, AI has a season and some forms of the flu are worse than others. The highly pathogenic H5N1 strain of bird flu has been found in an increasing number of countries in Europe, Asia and Africa. Currently, H5N1 avian influenza is not present in the United States. The U.S. Government is taking steps to prepare for and minimize the potential impact of this disease.

During FY06, the USDA participated in an enhanced interagency program to monitor wild migratory birds in the United States and to test various migratory bird species for avian influenza. WS Connecticut worked collaboratively with the State and other public and private organizations to conduct surveillance activities for avian influenza in wild migratory birds.

Protecting Federally Endangered Piping Plovers—During 2006, WS again assisted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in managing avian predation on federally protected piping plovers, as well as common and roseate terns that nest on Falkner Island off the coast of Connecticut. Working together under a cooperative interagency service agreement, the agencies have been able to reduce avian predation, which continue to enhance nesting success of these protected bird species.

Protecting Multiple Resources from Canada Goose Damage—The Canada goose population has been increasing in Connecticut for three decades and continues as a major wildlife problem. Many traditional management methods are becoming limited in effectiveness, while goose populations continue to grow. WS recommends the use of integrated wildlife damage management, in which multiple methods are used to mitigate damage. In control of goose damage this might combine habitat management, exclusion, harassment, and repellants. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) is working to develop more socially acceptable and effective management methods, including reproduction control, which Connecticut WS personnel currently conduct with towns and homeowner associations to reduce successful local goose reproduction.

In FY 2006, the WS Connecticut program conducted 79 consultations and resource loss

evaluations regarding Canada geese and provided recommendations associated with application for FWS depredation permits at no charge.

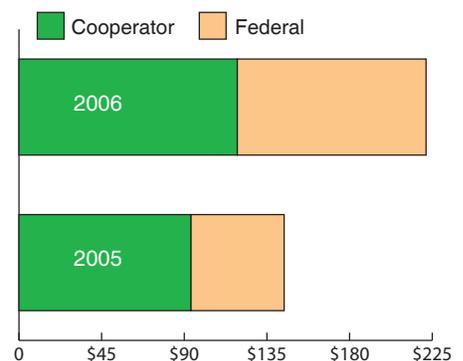
Looking to the Future

WS continues to provide citizens of Connecticut with safe, effective, and humane assistance for a variety of wildlife conflicts through cooperatively funded wildlife damage management activities. These will include (1) preventing the spread of wildlife-borne diseases rabies, salmonella, giardia, and E. coli, (2) meeting new wildlife damage management challenges to a dynamic Connecticut agricultural industry, (3) and continuing to improve strategies for reducing wildlife hazards at airports.

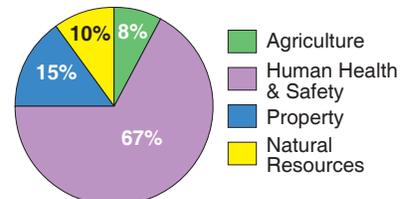
Connecticut Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and Local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. These cooperators have a role in wildlife damage management, because in most cases they need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or conflicts.

Total Funding (Thousands)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA is an equal employment provider and employer.

Major Cooperators:

- Connecticut Departments of Agriculture, of Environmental Protection and of Transportation
- Connecticut Extension System
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- University of Connecticut
- Private Industrial Companies
- Private Dairies and Farms
- Private Landfill Authorities