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Plant Health  
Inspection  
Service

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## WILDLIFE SERVICES—WYOMING

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### USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Wyoming

Every day, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on Wyoming 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.

A significant role of the Wyoming WS program is protecting domestic livestock from predators such as coyotes, red fox, mountain lions, black bears, and threatened or endangered species, such as grizzly bears and wolves. WS' trained specialists accurately identify the cause of livestock damage and resolve the conflict in a way that minimizes impacts on wildlife. In addition, Wyoming

WS is at the forefront of an effort to protect the public from skunk rabies. WS works with diverse cooperators, including airports, businesses, cities, counties, and individuals in both urban and rural settings, to curtail or prevent wildlife damage to a variety of resources.

### 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 Agriculture**—Agriculture ranks among the top three industries in Wyoming with an estimated economic impact of \$1 billion. Wyoming ranks eighth nationally in total land devoted to farms and ranches and ranks first in the average size of farms and ranches. The State's cattle industry accounts for about 75% of all agricultural cash receipts. Wyoming ranks third in the Nation in production of stock sheep and second in wool production.

WS works with both the cattle and sheep industries to protect livestock from predators. Coyotes, the most significant predator, are responsible for 65% of sheep lost to predators. Increasing populations of grizzly bears, wolves, and other species also contribute to increased incidents of livestock depredation. Wyoming Agriculture Statistics Service (WASS) reported that in 2005, Wyoming sheep producers lost 24,000 sheep and lambs, valued at approximately \$1.95 million, to predators.



Cattle producers also lose significant numbers of new calves and some cows to predators. Wyoming produced 740,000 calves in 2005. WASS estimates the value of cattle and calves lost to predation to be more than \$2 million. Research has shown that without a professional, accountable wildlife damage management program in place, livestock losses could be two to three times greater.

WS, in cooperation with the Wyoming Department of Agriculture, Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), 20 County Predatory Animal Boards, and the Animal Damage Management Board (ADMB), provides assistance to reduce losses to Wyoming statutory predators. WS also enters into cooperative agreements with the WGFD to assist in responding to black bear, grizzly bear, and mountain lion livestock depredation complaints statewide. Wildlife Services maintains an MOU with the USFWS to provide damage management services in support of the gray wolf recovery program.

To reduce predation, WS uses an integrated approach, relying on both nonlethal and lethal methods to remove livestock predators. An analysis of producers' operations found that 100% of Wyoming livestock producers who cooperate with WS use non-lethal methods to protect their livestock, which reduces predator losses and minimizes the need for lethal control. While producer-employed non-lethal strategies vary, some producers utilize as many as

#### Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting livestock from Wyoming statutory predators, primarily coyotes
- Participating on the Wyoming Animal Damage Management Board (ADMB) and associated wildlife enhancement and disease projects
- Controlling skunk rabies in Wyoming
- Responding to wolf, grizzly bear, black bear and mountain lion depredations
- Managing damage and threats caused by migratory and feral birds to airports, economic resources and public health and safety

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

- Developing chemistry-based tools for wildlife damage management
- Focusing on adult territorial coyotes to manage sheep depredation
- Managing coyote predation through reproductive intervention strategies
- Managing predators through new methods to protect livestock and wildlife
- Developing an oral rabies vaccine and delivery systems targeting skunks

18 separate nonlethal techniques throughout the year. When damage occurs despite these efforts, WS removes the offending animals.

**Wildlife Diseases**—Wyoming is one of 23 states in the WS' Wildlife Disease Program, staffing a fulltime Wildlife Disease Biologist. This individual plays a supporting role with State (WGFD and Wyoming Livestock Board) and Federal (USDA-Veterinary Services) agencies regarding relevant in-state disease issues, such as chronic wasting disease and brucellosis. The disease biologist also coordinates and conducts statewide surveillance projects at the request of various agencies (Wyoming Department of Health, Wyoming ADMB and Centers for Disease Control). Recently, a survey of coyotes evaluated seroprevalence of plague in four eastern Wyoming counties, a response to concerns that the disease may be expanding its range in eastern Wyoming and western South Dakota. During late 2006, as part of a nationwide surveillance program to detect highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), the biologist sampled shorebirds and waterfowl. Furthermore, Wyoming WS has been cooperating with the State's ADMB and State Veterinary Laboratory in Laramie for the third straight year to provide striped skunks for an ongoing statewide rabies surveillance program. The disease biologist also deals with wildlife disease issues on a national scale, having been deployed to other states (South Dakota, Colorado, California, Michigan and Minnesota) 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 the Wildlife Disease Biologist position, providing highly trained professionals to address emergencies surrounding national

**Major Cooperators:**

- Wyoming Wool Growers Association
- Wyoming Stock Growers Association
- Wyoming Department of Agriculture
- Wyoming Game and Fish Department
- Wyoming Animal Damage Management Board
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Foundation for North American Wild Sheep – Wyoming Chapter
- County predatory animal boards (20)
- Wyoming Department of Health
- Wyoming Airports

and international wildlife disease outbreaks and natural disasters.

**Protecting Threatened and Endangered Species**—The experimental reintroduction of gray wolves in the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem occurred in 1995. Today, the gray wolf population has grown to nearly 1,300 wolves, far exceeding all biological goals for delisting. During 2006, wolves in Wyoming maintained a population of over 300 animals and 32 packs. When wolves turn from their natural prey species, such as elk, and attack livestock, WS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) work cooperatively to identify damage and resolve wolf depredation complaints. During 2006, WS verified 129 of 145 received reports of wolf predation incidents, determining that 124 cattle, 39 sheep, two horses and two dogs were killed or injured by wolves. In response to these depredations, and at the request of the USFWS Endangered Species Wolf Program managers, 55 wolves were removed. Five were radio-collared and released. Wildlife Services also provides field services to the USFWS in monitoring and identifying wolf populations and distributions. The efficient and professional management of problem wolves builds public support/tolerance for their presence and promotes conservation of all wolves.

**Protecting Air Travel at Airports**—Visitors and residents of Wyoming enjoy a diverse and bountiful wildlife population that exists within urban areas as well as the surrounding countryside. The mutual tolerance comes at a risk to travel, in particular the cost of damage and threat to human life that an aircraft collision entails.

Airports in Wyoming effectively eliminated the potential of large mammal strikes by protecting the airfield with high fences. Although not completely excluding large mammals, they have made the occurrence a rarity. Unfortunately, birds are not as easily dissuaded from airports and the surrounding habitat. Because Wyoming has significantly fewer air operations, with slower and smaller aircraft, the number of bird strikes is correspondingly lower. WS has completed initial consultations at all commercial airports and is providing wildlife hazard assessments at Cody, Cheyenne and Jackson as required by Federal Aviation Administration. Where wildlife permits are needed for removal, WS assists the airports in completing their permit requirements.

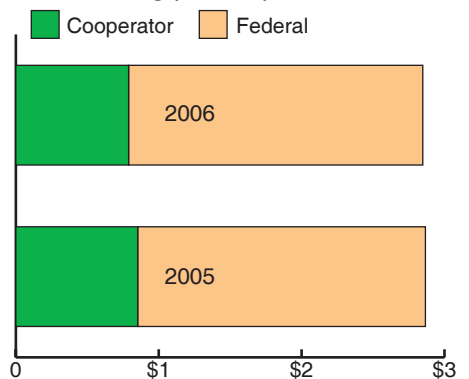
**Looking to the Future**

To address increasing requests for assistance, Wyoming Wildlife Services is working with State and County stakeholders to increase cooperative funding. In 2006, the Wyoming Legislature passed legislation that will provide additional resources to address wildlife damage issues through the Wyoming Animal Damage Board and County Predator Management Districts (PMDs). The legislation also placed responsibility for managing predator damage to wildlife with the local PMDs. These funds will enable projects to restore or enhance deer, antelope, bighorn sheep, sage grouse and other species. WS partners with 21 of the states 23 counties, with expansion of staff and equipment underway.

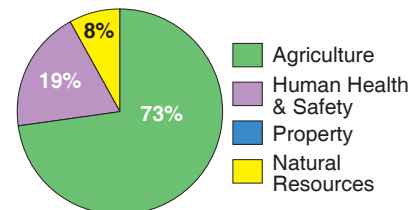
**Wyoming Wildlife Services Funding**

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators who have a vested interest in the program: livestock 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. Growth underway due to recent state legislation will be supported by increases fees to cooperators without increased federal support.

**Total Funding (Millions)**



**Resources Protected FY06 % of Total Funds**



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