



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

**Wildlife
Services**

FY 2004

WILDLIFE SERVICES—CALIFORNIA

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in California

Every day, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on California Wildlife Services (WS) for its expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, professional, and selective strategies to resolve conflicts between humans and wildlife. California is a diverse mix of urban and suburban settings, agricultural lands, forests, and desert environments. With more than 35 million residents, and a population growth rate higher than the national average, human interactions with wildlife are expected to increase over time as people encroach on both agricultural property and wildlife habitat. WS employees help California's livestock and fruit producers reduce losses from predators and birds. They address serious beaver damage to California's transportation infrastructure, crops, and other natural resources. WS also protects the lives of pilots, air passengers, and aircraft from dangerous wildlife collisions with aircraft. In addition, WS helps to protect many threatened and endangered species from other wildlife predators.



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 telephone. WS also

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting sheep, cattle, goats, and poultry from predation
- Protecting public health through monitoring of plague, rabies, and other communicable wildlife diseases
- Protecting public safety against attacks and threats by mountain lions, black bears, coyotes, and other wildlife
- Protecting passengers and aircraft from collisions with wildlife
- Protecting federal and state listed threatened and endangered species

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to California:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing predators through new methods to protect livestock and wildlife
- Managing wildlife transmission of rabies
- Inducing infertility as a wildlife management tool
- Estimating the costs and benefits of WS' efforts to manage wildlife damage

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 Health and Safety at Airports—Experts estimate that wildlife strikes with aircraft cost the U.S. civil aviation industry more than \$502 million annually. California has many of the country's busiest airports with 37,295 aircraft providing transportation to more than 159 million passengers (enplanements and deplanements) annually. Many of California's airports are located along the coast in close proximity to the Pacific Flyway. WS is recognized internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS' NWRC continually conducts research to understand the nature of wildlife hazards at airports, develop management tools to reduce these hazards, and provide airport personnel with information to control or prevent these hazards. Applying this scientific expertise, the California WS program provided assistance to 29 airports in 2004, including technical assistance, training, and direct operational management. On-site evaluations, as well as comprehensive wildlife hazard assessments were also completed in 2004.

Surveillance of Wildlife Diseases—Wildlife Services has expanded its role in California in monitoring and preventing the spread of diseases in wildlife which may pose threats to humans, as well as to wild and domestic animals. California WS has employed a wildlife disease biologist to work closely with California Department

of Food and Agriculture, California Department of Fish and Game, California Department of Health Services, USDA-APHIS-Veterinary Services, California universities, and numerous other entities to monitor diseases in wildlife for the purpose of safeguarding wildlife populations, agriculture, and human health.

Protecting Livestock from Predators—In addition to the many factors that cause economic hardships for livestock producers, predators like coyotes, bears, and mountain lions cause additional and sometimes significant losses by attacking sheep, cattle, and goats. It is estimated that in California and other Western States, about 75 percent of WS' cooperative agreements are with small farmers and ranchers. In 2000, the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) surveyed California cattle producers and found that they lost 14,900 cattle and calves to predators that year, resulting in more than \$5 million in losses. NASS conducted a similar study of sheep producers in 1999 and found that they lost an estimated 17,000 head of livestock worth almost \$1.3 million. Research results suggest these figures could be 2 to 3 times higher in the absence of an effective livestock protection program. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) is working hard to develop additional methods of managing predators that prey on livestock. The center's research efforts on traps and snares has improved the selectivity of these tools. Pantension devices on traps and breakaway snares help ensure that only depreddating animals are caught.

Protecting Threatened and Endangered Species—Habitat destruction and human encroachment are long-term threats to California's large number of threatened and endangered species. Predators ranging from feral cats to nonnative species like red fox, and even native species like raccoons, coyotes, striped skunks, and raptors threaten these species. During the past decade, the California WS program has been involved in numerous projects to protect threatened and endangered species. In fiscal year 2004, WS conducted projects to protect six bird species, the California red-legged frog, the desert tortoise, the purple amole flower, and the Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep just to name a few. In nearly all cases, the projects resulted in the threatened or endangered species populations being maintained or increased.

Addressing Wildlife Damage to Property in Urban Areas—Numerous species of wild animals inhabit cities and suburbs throughout California. Striped skunks, Virginia opossums and raccoons commonly forage in backyards and seek shelter under porches and

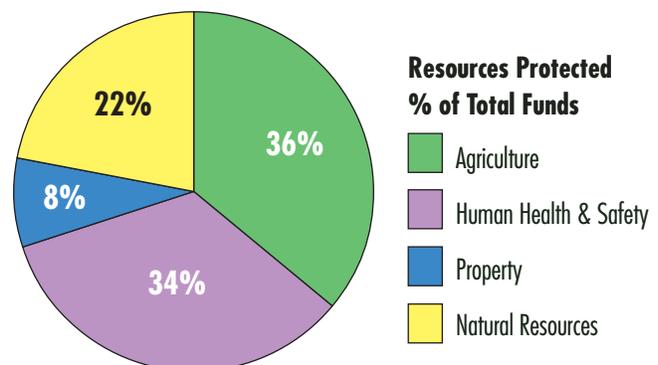
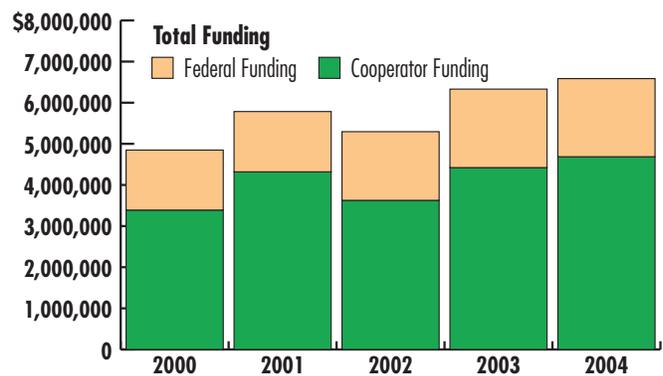
buildings or in attics causing substantial damage to the structures. In other situations these animals may leave behind offensive odors that can result in the structure being temporarily uninhabitable. In fiscal year 2004, WS wildlife specialists conducted 8,208 visits to homes and other locations to investigate and resolve wildlife damage to property.

Looking to the Future

In California, public safety has become a growing concern for wildlife managers. This is particularly true at airports. Increased travel through California's airports, coupled with a growth in the population of many bird species, has created a greater need for airport managers to manage threats posed by wildlife. A second issue related to public safety involves the increased need to protect people from large predators such as coyotes, black bears, and mountain lions. In fiscal year 2004, WS personnel responded to 4,961 requests for assistance where public health and safety were being threatened by wildlife. In addition, WS expects to continue to work cooperatively with other Federal agencies, State agencies, and Universities throughout California to conduct surveillance for wildlife borne diseases that negatively impact humans, livestock, and other wildlife.

California 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. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role



Major Cooperators

- County Departments of Agriculture
- California Department of Fish and Game
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- California Department of Parks and Recreation
- California Army National Guard,
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)
- Airports