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WILDLIFE SERVICES—KENTUCKY

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Kentucky

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

Kentucky has rich and abundant natural resources and is home to a diverse mix of urban and suburban settings, rural environments, forests, and agricultural lands. This ecological variety gives the State a remarkably diverse range of wildlife species. WS works with associations, organizations, and individuals to protect property, agricultural and natural resources, and the quality of life for residents of Kentucky. WS biologists help protect human health and safety and property from loss and damage caused by starlings, blackbirds, Canada geese, skunks, and beaver. In addition, WS reduces agricultural losses from predators and birds; protects pilots, air passengers, and aircraft from dangerous wildlife collisions with aircraft; and assists in protecting human health and safety from communicable wildlife diseases.



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 Air Travel—Every year, lives are endangered worldwide and billions of dollars are wasted when wildlife damage aircraft. Bird strikes with airplanes cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$470 million annually and pose devastating hazards to passengers and flight crews. According to recent Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reports, Kentucky airports average more than 75 wildlife strikes per year. Kentucky is home to one of the country's busiest airports (with more 13.5 million passengers annually) and it is located along the Mississippi and Atlantic flyways for migratory waterfowl.

WS is recognized internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS' research arm, the National Wildlife Research Center (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 Kentucky WS program provides assistance to several airports each year. In addition to offering training, equipment and information, WS also provides direct assistance

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting public safety and property from Canada geese, pigeon, starling, blackbird, and other wildlife damage
- Protecting natural resources, timber, agriculture, and transportation infrastructures from beaver damage
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Protecting municipal utility structures, residential property, and livestock from vulture damage
- Protecting public safety from wildlife diseases

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Kentucky:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing problems caused by starlings, blackbirds, and vultures
- Controlling wildlife vectors of rabies
- Protecting timber and forest resources from beaver and rodent damage
- Reducing goose damage through avian infertility

when necessary. On-site evaluations as well as comprehensive wildlife hazard assessments are conducted before WS begins any control work. For these Kentucky airports, safety concerns were most often associated with the presence of wildlife roosting and foraging on or around the airfields. WS personnel were able to reduce wildlife related hazards by approximately 90 percent at these airports.

Protecting Human Health and Safety, Property, and Structures

—Canada geese, starlings, and other migratory birds cause severe structural, agricultural, and property damage, as well as threaten the health and safety of Kentucky residents. Damage includes power outages resulting from nest building activities, aquaculture losses from predation, and health risks associated with fecal contamination. Most waterfowl damage involves urban environments, which creates concerns about sanitation, water quality, and aesthetics from bird droppings. In addition, golf courses, parks, and other recreational areas experience extensive damage to turf, fairways, and greens from feeding birds.

WS biologists at NWRC are working to develop effective management tools such as low-power lasers that repel starlings and pigeons from perching or roosting, and disperse Canada geese and mallards from turf.

WS biologists provide assistance to Kentucky citizens through hands-on management work, seminars, and one-on-one advice either over the telephone or in person. The WS program addresses more than 500 requests for assistance with migratory birds each year in Kentucky.

Looking to the Future

Public safety, urban wildlife, beaver, and white-tailed deer damage have become growing concerns for wildlife managers. Increased urbanization and expansion into formerly rural areas coupled with escalating wildlife populations has led to a rise in wildlife conflicts with humans. Growing populations of white-tailed deer, waterfowl, starlings, and many bird species have created a greater need for airport managers to deal with threats posed by wildlife, especially as the number of air travelers increases.

Other urban and suburban conflicts involve threats to human health and safety, as well as wildlife damage to homes, buildings, lawns, and utility structures. The rising population of white-tailed deer has led to more collisions with vehicles and damage to natural resources, landscaping, and property. Kentucky's growing beaver population is causing greater damage to the State's agricultural crops, timber, roadways, and natural resources as a lack of recreational trapping and expanding habitat have allowed their numbers to flourish. As WS strives to provide the people of Kentucky with safe, effective, and humane assistance for their wildlife conflicts, the growing number and variety of problems combined with diminished resources creates an on-going challenge for the program.

Kentucky 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 in wildlife damage management.

