



United States
Department of
Agriculture

**Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service**

FY 2002



WILDLIFE SERVICES—MISSOURI

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Missouri

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

Missouri WS operates four field offices and one Statewide office that is located in Columbia. WS is responsible for wildlife damage management on all Federal lands, at all airports, and for all issues dealing with migratory birds. A large portion of WS' work in Missouri is dedicated to protecting public health and safety by managing problems associated with migratory birds.

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.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting public safety and aircraft from wildlife at airports and military bases
- Managing problems caused by Canada geese, pigeons, blackbirds, and starlings
- Monitoring bird populations for viruses such as St. Louis Encephalitis and West Nile virus
- Controlling muskrats in areas where they damage property
- Removing beaver and beaver dams from areas where they damage property

WS Research Projects of Interest to Missouri:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing bird damage to rice



Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—WS works to reduce aircraft/wildlife strikes by providing both technical and direct assistance at Missouri airports, using an integrated management approach. Since 1990, 19 civil airports in the State have recorded more than 500 wildlife strikes. The number of actual strikes is likely to be much greater since experts estimate that about 80 percent of bird strikes go unreported.

WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), conducts research from its Sandusky, OH, field station to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation and to reduce risks to the public. Studies are underway at several large U.S. airports where scientists evaluate habitat management practices and wildlife dispersal techniques. NWRC also maintains the National Wildlife Strike Database used by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and airports to monitor trends and wildlife species that pose the greatest threat to aviation.

The Missouri WS staff works with the FAA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to ensure the safety of the flying public. WS obtains FWS permits to manage damage caused by federally protected birds, reviews airport construction and expansion projects for potential wildlife related hazards, and conducts wildlife hazard assessments.

WS is currently managing wildlife damage at four civil airports, and one U.S. Air Force base. These services range from conducting wildlife hazard assessments to developing a complete Wildlife Damage Management Plan. Habitat modification has been an integral tool used to reduce wildlife strikes. These modifications include implementing crop free zones within 2000 feet of runways, starting a controlled cattle grazing program, removing trees, and constructing wildlife fences.

WS' largest aviation project is at Whiteman Air Force Base (AFB) where program specialists protect the B-2 Stealth Bomber and its crews from wildlife strikes. Since 1993, aircraft stationed at Whiteman AFB have reported more than 375 bird strikes. Before WS began managing wildlife damage at the base in 1996, military officials reported more than \$230,000 in damage to aircraft with an average of 9.6 bird strikes per 1000 hours of flying annually. In 2002, Whiteman AFB reported \$16,000 in damage to aircraft with 5.6 bird strikes per 1000 hours of flying, a significant decrease in strike rates. In 2001, damage to aircraft was \$135,000. WS activities at Whiteman AFB include both technical and direct assistance. In addition, base personnel have been trained by WS to identify and do some control work. WS has also developed and implemented a Wildlife Management Plan and recommended habitat modification, capture and relocation for birds of prey, and the removal of problem birds and mammals, using both lethal and nonlethal methods.

Protecting Public Health and Safety from Wildlife Disease—

WS cooperates with several State agencies to provide early detection of mosquito-born viruses, such as St. Louis Encephalitis and West Nile virus. WS has also been called upon to protect livestock and people from health threats related to captive wildlife and exotic animals. In addition, WS personnel actively participate on several wildlife boards, including the Feral Swine Task Force, the Governor's Task Force on Chronic Wasting Disease, and the Council on Captive Wild and Exotic Animals.

WS provides both technical and direct assistance to the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Corps of Engineers, and others in resolving problems with feral hogs and the threats they pose. Feral hogs are known carriers of pseudorabies and swine brucellosis, diseases that present significant risks to people and livestock.

Protecting Property and Crops—WS protects property and agriculture from wildlife damage, including levees destroyed by muskrats, rice crops destroyed by blackbirds, flooded crops and roads caused by beaver dams, and disease and depredation at aquaculture facilities caused by herons. In 2002, beaver caused more than \$32,000 in damage in Southeast Missouri. In 2002, WS also documented more than \$358,000 in losses caused by fish-eating birds at Missouri aquaculture facilities.

Looking to the Future

Since 1993, the Missouri resident Canada goose population has quadrupled in size causing damage to crops, and destroying lawns and golf courses. Despite assistance by WS, such damage to turf and crops exceeded \$15,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2002. In FY 2001, damage was estimated at more than \$16,000.

With the continuing increase of wildlife conflicts and more airports requesting assistance, WS is constantly struggling to effectively meet the demands. Additionally, Missouri is concerned with increasing wild hog populations in the State and is looking for the professional expertise and experience of WS to eradicate this growing problem.

Missouri 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.

