Wildlife Services’ Nonlethal Initiative

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In the United States, predator-livestock conflict is a concern for livestock producers. While coyotes are responsible for most predator-related losses of livestock, producers also worry about impacts to their animals’ health and wellbeing by other larger carnivores, such as wolves, bears and mountain lions.

In both FY2020 and FY2021, WS received $1.38M in Congressional funding to expand its research and increase the implementation of nonlethal livestock protection projects in multiple states. Informally called the “WS Nonlethal Initiative,” these funds support the increased use and evaluation of a variety of methods and tools, such as range riding, fladry, guard dogs, and electric fencing. In FY2022, Congress increased the Initiative’s funding to $2.5M and expanded its activities to include beaver damage management and research.

It’s important to note that this funding is in addition to WS’ yearly allocated budget for wildlife damage management and research. Furthermore, the activities mentioned above represent only a fraction of the many nonlethal damage management activities conducted by WS employees across the country every year as part of our integrated wildlife damage management approach.

To learn more about our activities and accomplishments associated with the Initiative, please click on the links below.

Wildlife Services' Nonlethal Initiative

Learn about Wildlife Services' Nonlethal Initiative for livestock protection.

Nonlethal Methods: What Do Livestock Producers Think?
FY21 Annual Report – WS Nonlethal Initiative for Livestock Protection

WS Nonlethal Damage Management Activities

Over the years, WS' philosophy—as well as the wildlife management profession as a whole—has evolved, along with societal values and perspectives. Program personnel work to find a balance among a variety of priorities, including wildlife and environmental conservation, human health and safety, economic considerations, and social factors. WS' integrated wildlife damage management approach (WS Directive 2.105: The WS Integrated Wildlife Damage Management Program (12.69 KB)) uses both practical lethal and nonlethal methods of prevention and control.

WS personnel encounter about 26 million animals each year when responding to calls for assistance. Approximately, 93% of them are dispersed using nonlethal methods. Below are examples of some of the nonlethal methods used by WS to resolve conflicts between people and wildlife.

- Habitat Modification
- Fencing and Other Barriers
- Repellents and Scare Devices
- Vaccines
- Wildlife Contraceptives
- Translocation

Learn more about these and other nonlethal tools by exploring the Nonlethal Tools for Wildlife Damage Management storymap and Nonlethal Tools Flicker site.

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