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USDA Wildlife Services Posts Fiscal Year 2022 Data on Management Actions and Funding Sources

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On March 23, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) wildlife damage management program, Wildlife Services (WS), posted its annual Program Data Reports (PDR) for fiscal year (FY) 2022. The reports are available on the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) webpage, representing the 27th year that WS has shared this information about its wildlife damage management activities.

In the United States, wildlife is a public resource held in trust and managed by government agencies for present and future generations. Wildlife is a highly valued natural resource that provides important ecosystem services, food and clothing, and recreational activities that generate billions of dollars of economic activity annually. While wildlife contributes a lot of positive value to the human environment, they also can have negative impacts on agriculture, human health and safety, property, and natural resources. Predators cause an estimated \$232 million in losses to livestock producers annually and bird damage to crops exceeds \$150 million each year. Bird and other wildlife strikes with aircraft cost hundreds of millions of dollars in damage, delay flights, and threaten human health and safety. Abundant predators can have dramatic impacts on threatened and endangered species as in the case of nesting piping plovers and sea turtles which are vulnerable to raccoons, foxes, and invasive

feral swine. APHIS responds to requests for assistance from individuals, companies, and other government agencies when wildlife causes or threatens damage to human health/safety, agriculture, natural resources, and property.

In FY 2022, APHIS encountered about 21.5 million animals causing damage, or threatening to cause damage, while responding to calls for assistance and dispersed nearly 20 million of these animals unharmed from urban, rural, and other settings. APHIS dispersed 91.4% of the animals encountered. However, nonlethal methods cannot resolve all wildlife related conflicts. Of all wildlife encountered, APHIS lethally removed 8.6%, or approximately 1.85 million, from areas where damage was occurring. Invasive species accounted for 79% (1,466,580) of the wildlife lethally removed. Additionally:

- The invasive species removed included 1,175,244 European starlings, 136,791 feral swine, and more than 11,000 brown tree snakes in Guam.
- 60,279 were native Northern pike minnow that APHIS removed to protect federally threatened and endangered salmon and steelhead in the Pacific Northwest.

In instances where lethal control was necessary, APHIS worked to donate as much animal meat as possible. In FY 2022, APHIS donated nearly 150 tons of deer, goose, and other meat—more than 1 million servings of protein for people in need—and over 20 tons of meat for animal consumption to animal rehab centers, zoos, and other facilities, making full use of this resource from wildlife damage management work.

Program Data Reports

APHIS WS carries out its activities with a combination of congressionally appropriated and cooperator provided funding. In FY 2022, WS received \$109.2 million in appropriated funds (49% of its total budget) to manage wildlife damage operations in every state and territory, conduct research, and to support special programs, such as managing feral swine damage and rabies in raccoons and other wildlife. Funding from program cooperators — including federal and state agencies, counties, livestock producers, and other agricultural producer groups, other organizations, businesses, and individuals — allowed WS to maximize its scope and effectiveness. During FY 2022, WS received \$111.5 million in cooperator-provided funding (51% of its total budget) for operational wildlife damage management (see [PDR A](#) for funding sources and expenditures nationally and by state). In FY 2022,

APHIS spent its budget as follows:

- 36.5% to protect agriculture, including livestock, row crops, aquaculture, and timber.
- 31.5% to reduce or prevent wildlife hazards to human health and safety, such as wildlife collisions with aircraft and disease transmission.
- 19% on protection of property.
- 13% on natural resource protection, including threatened and endangered species.

Data Highlights

The PDRs list the work carried out by APHIS wildlife biologists and field specialists, with information by state, species, and other details. Some key FY 2022 highlights include the following:

- WS and its cooperators protected more than 335 threatened or endangered wildlife and plant species from the impacts of disease, invasive species, and predators. Partners seeking assistance, including private organizations and federal, state, and local wildlife agencies, financially support most of these operations. ([PDR B](#)).
- [PDR C](#) identifies the specific resources protected and the wildlife species that threaten or damage the resources in operations where a stakeholder, cooperator, or WS has reported a value of the damage. It identifies the number and species of recorded threats or damage to the reported damage value. About two-thirds of the recorded wildlife conflicts were associated with wildlife damage to property and agricultural resources.
- In FY 2022, APHIS reached more than 200,000 participants in more than 70,000 information-sharing projects. These technical assistance projects, including telephone or onsite consultations, written materials, and training, help individuals resolve wildlife conflicts they are experiencing. [PDR D](#) details technical assistance projects by state, type of service, and wildlife species.
- [PDR E](#) highlights APHIS' work to reduce aviation strikes with wildlife at 814 airports. The airports and agencies requesting assistance from WS' [Airport Wildlife Hazard Program](#) paid for this work under cooperative service agreements. In FY 2022, WS trained 6,098 personnel on airport wildlife hazard identification and management.
- APHIS wildlife disease biologists collected over 57,700 wildlife disease samples to test for 31 different diseases and conditions in wild mammals, birds, and

reptiles as part of the [National Wildlife Disease Program](#). [PDR F](#) details the activity. This is a 41% increase in sampling from FY 2021, in large part due to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) sampling. Avian influenza accounted for approximately 26% of the disease samples taken in FY 2022 (15,083), an increase from 5,621 samples taken in FY 2021. About 22% (12,667) of the samples were collected for the [National Rabies Management Program](#). APHIS employees collected 11,033 SARS-CoV-2 samples in FY 2022, which amounted to 19.12% of the total disease samples taken. APHIS took samples from feral swine for 9 diseases or conditions, genetics, or other research. Most sampling in feral swine was for classical swine fever, pseudorabies, swine brucellosis, and genetics.

- [PDR G](#) lists the number of animals dispersed, killed/euthanized, or freed during APHIS' wildlife damage management operations. APHIS implements an integrated damage management approach which uses a variety of effective and practical nonlethal and lethal methods to resolve wildlife damage problems. As noted above, APHIS removed 1.85 million animals in FY 2022, including 1.47 million invasive wildlife and 383,731 native wildlife.
- Invasive European starlings, native blackbirds, and other species listed on the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Depredation Order](#) comprise 65% of animals APHIS lethally removed in FY 2022, totaling 1,219,681 birds with minimal population effect. For example, APHIS removed less than ½ of 1% of the national estimated red-winged blackbird and brown-headed cowbird breeding populations of 150 million and 120 million, respectively. These abundant birds cause extensive damage to food crops, such as rice and other grains, livestock, property, and other commodities, and they pose a human health and safety concern. APHIS used nonlethal methods to disperse an additional 11 million starlings, blackbirds, cowbirds, crows, grackles, and magpies from areas where they were causing damage.
- WS methods are highly selective towards the species causing damage. More than 99.8% of the animals lethally removed were the intended targets of APHIS' wildlife damage management actions. However, APHIS did unintentionally remove 2,503 native animals. WS tracks and reports unintended removal and adapts field operations to minimize unintentional take, wherever possible.
- Invasive species accounted for 79% of all lethally removed wildlife in FY 2022, including 136,791 invasive feral swine removed as part of the National Feral Swine Damage Management Program.

- In contrast, native species accounted for only 21% (383,731) of all animals WS lethally removed. Lethal actions for damage management remove a small percentage of native wildlife compared to their overall populations or range. For example, out of an estimated 300,000 black bears nationwide, APHIS euthanized 450 and relocated 599 black bears in 22 states, in compliance with the states' wildlife agencies' policies.
- Due to their nationwide abundance, coyotes are the most common predator of livestock, killing more than 300,000 head of cattle/calves, sheep/lambs, and goats/kids annually according to National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) surveys of livestock producers. The 2020 NASS Sheep and Lamb Death Loss Report noted that coyote predation accounted for 32.6% of sheep losses and 40.1% of lamb losses. More than three-quarters (77.1%) of producers used nonlethal predator damage management methods, spending approximately \$51.4 million to prevent predation on livestock. WS works in partnership with livestock producers to reduce predation through integrated damage management programs. In FY 2022, WS removed 56,089 coyotes nationwide during wildlife damage management operations to protect resources. By comparison, trappers and hunters across 37 states where coyote harvest is tracked took an average of approximately 463,000 coyotes annually over the last five years of published data (2014 – 2018) in state-regulated fur harvests.
- APHIS treated 14,910 acres using EPA-registered products to resolve damage. APHIS used zinc phosphide wheat or oats for control of various rodents (7,599 acres). Delta Dust insecticide reduced plague-vector fleas in prairie dog tunnels for the protection of the endangered black-footed ferrets (7,311 acres).

Most species whose damage APHIS actively manages are abundant or have increasing populations and/or expanding ranges. APHIS balances its focused efforts to resolve wildlife conflicts with stewardship responsibilities toward the long-term maintenance and health of wildlife populations.

As a federal agency with public trust responsibilities to manage wildlife for present and future generations, APHIS complies with all federal and state laws, such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and Endangered Species Act, as well as executive orders pertaining to invasive species management. APHIS conducts careful environmental review of all agency actions through a NEPA process that includes public involvement. To learn more, please visit the [WS Website](#).