

Wildlife Services Directive

WS 4.175
December 2025

PUBLICATIONS

1. **PURPOSE**

To promote the development of high-quality publications by Wildlife Services employees and to provide guidelines for establishing authorship and review of Wildlife Services manuscripts and videos.

2. **REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS**

This directive replaces WS Directive 4.175 dated August 13, 2014.

3. **AUTHORITY**

7 U.S.C. 8351 to 8353 and 16 U.S.C. 667 authorize officers, agents, and employees of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS) to conduct a program of wildlife services and to enter into agreements with states, local jurisdictions, individuals, and public and private agencies, organizations, and institutions for the purpose of conducting such services.

4. **BACKGROUND**

WS has a long history of publishing built on several general principles.

- Authorship is both a responsibility and a privilege, and authors should be able and willing to defend the work publicly.
- Authorship means that an individual has been familiarized with all aspects of the work and has contributed essentially and substantially to the product in one or more of the following areas: development of the idea; design of the study; collection of the data; data analysis and interpretation; and/or preparation of the document.
- Entities providing funding for a study or existing samples do not automatically connote authorship.
- Authors should avoid conflicts by ensuring clear communication of authorship intentions and expectations between all parties involved in the study or

publication throughout the effort, beginning with planning and initiation, and continuing through manuscript development.

5. POLICY

- a. Publication of internal USDA material such as factsheets, brochures, flyers, displays, stakeholder announcements, and internal newsletters requires Public Affairs or Communication Specialist review and is not addressed in this directive.
- b. WS employees may communicate scientific, technical, and appropriate non-technical program information externally through formal publications such as scientific journals, books and book chapters, conference proceedings, technical publications, magazines, videos, and storyboards, etc. These publications are generally peer-reviewed or peer-edited. No material shall be submitted for publication until an internal review is completed, and all approvals have been obtained, regardless of where WS authors fall within the order of authorship (i.e., first, middle, last).
- c. The WS internal review process is not meant to duplicate the peer review process for in-depth editorial edits. The main purpose is to ensure that the government's interests are protected and that sensitive issues or assurances, even unintentional, that suggest government action is necessary, are addressed in advance or removed. When reporting scientific findings in their official capacities, USDA employees should refrain from making or publishing statements that could be construed as being judgments of, or recommendations for, USDA or another Federal Government or State Government policy, unless they have secured appropriate prior approval to do so. Such communications should remain within the bounds of their scientific or technological findings, unless otherwise authorized.
- d. All publications external to USDA should acknowledge and disclose the public funding of the published work by USDA and any other sources of funding. Funding acknowledgment statements raise the visibility of USDA-funded research efforts and allow the public to readily identify publications from USDA scientists and employees and should include the following funding acknowledgment statement model: "This [research/work/ presentation] was supported [in part] by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, [insert agency name]." See DR 1410-001 5.f.5-6
- e. Authors should include disclaimers for all publications external to USDA unless advised otherwise by the supervisor of record or APHIS Science Committee representative, and for all publications evaluating commercial products. USDA's standard disclaimer is: "The findings and conclusions in this [publication/ presentation] are those of the author(s) and should not be construed

to represent any official USDA or U.S. Government determination or policy.”
See DR 1410-001 5.f.7

f. Data Management Plan - The USDA will make all peer-reviewed and peer-edited, scholarly publications and digital scientific research data assets arising from unclassified scientific research supported wholly or in part by the USDA accessible to the public, to the extent practicable. See DR 1020-006

g. Scholarly publications must receive digital persistent identifiers, such as a Digital Object Identifier (DOI), which are generally provided by the publisher. See DR 1020-006 5.b.2

h. All authors are required to have individual digital persistent identifiers, such as the Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID), that are linked to their data assets and other research products. See DR 1020-006 5.c.6

i. All authors are required to use their federal affiliations for all forms of publication and are prohibited from listing adjunct or joint affiliations. The standard minimum affiliation in the author’s byline shall be listed as United States Department of Agriculture, APHIS, Wildlife Services, followed by the official duty station address. National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) employees may add National Wildlife Research Center after Wildlife Services. As a rule of thumb, the author’s byline reflects their duty location when the work was performed. Retired or former WS employees may continue to author publications and may list their current address as a footnote. WS employees who author publications from prior employment (e.g., graduate school, university, other agency) should use their former byline information and may include their WS address and .gov email address, if necessary, as a footnote. When a contractor with WS is an author, they should use their employer’s affiliation byline only.

j. Authors are required to use their official .gov addresses for email contact. Alternative email addresses are not permitted.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

a. Draft Publication Review

I. Routing

i. All WS authors shall ensure their leadership (e.g., State Director, project leader) has seen and been provided an opportunity to comment on the manuscript prior to further routing (See Section 6.a.III.i.).

ii. With leadership concurrence, the WS lead/corresponding author shall ensure that the Publication Transmittal Record is completed (Attachment 1)

prior to submitting the draft publication to the publication outlet.

- iii. If a publication results from an NWRC Quality Assurance (QA) protocol, the QA number should be provided in the space provided on the Publication Transmittal Record (Attachment 1).

II. Author Concurrence

- i. All WS authors must sign the Publication Transmittal Record (Attachment 1). Signatures convey the authors' respective leadership approval of submission for publication and that the authors have reviewed the manuscript for submission and agree that the contents are accurate.
- ii. The WS lead/corresponding author shall ensure that all external authors have read and agree with the publication's findings, and their signature on the Publication Transmittal Record (Attachment 1) serves as the official record of agreement. Accordingly, all WS authors must sign the Publication Transmittal Record. Names and signatures from non-WS authors are not required on the Publication Transmittal Record.
- iii. When external (i.e., non-WS) authors are involved, the WS lead/corresponding author will submit an email along with the Manuscript Transmittal Record as an official record that all authors have reviewed and approved the submission of the publication.

III. Administrative Approval

- i. The WS lead/corresponding author will submit the draft publication for review to their respective Project/Unit Leader, State Director, or National Program Coordinator designee if he/she is not in one of these positions. This internal review may include editorial comments that address grammar, style, or content, and this may be an iterative process. As a courtesy, the WS lead/corresponding author should submit the draft publication to multiple leaders when the scope of the publication includes multiple program areas. As an example, authors of an NWRC feral swine research study conducted in Missouri should simultaneously send drafts to the NWRC project leader, the state director, and the national program coordinator. The WS lead/corresponding author is responsible for discussing an expected timeline with their respective leader(s) and should not expect an immediate turnaround.
- ii. After receiving feedback and approval within their leadership chain, the WS lead/corresponding author will submit the draft publication for policy and sensitive topics/areas review and approval to the appropriate manager, copying the NWRC Program Specialist, who will track and file the process

for all WS publications. Where the publication is a video, the WS lead/corresponding author will simultaneously submit the video and/or storyboard/script to a Public Affairs or Communication Specialist for review. A Publication Transmittal Record (Attachment 1) and accompanying email, when appropriate, will be submitted along with the draft publication. Authors should expect a review from their respective manager within 2 weeks unless during periods of high tempo (e.g., end of fiscal year) or typical periods of block leave (e.g., winter break/holidays).

Managers for review and approval are:

- (a) NWRC – Director / Assistant Directors
 - (b) Eastern and Western Regions – Directors / Assistant Directors
 - (c) National Programs – Coordinators
 - (d) Operational Support Staff – Director
 - (e) When WS coauthors from NWRC, Regions, National Programs, and OSS work together on a publication, only one reviewing manager is required to review the draft.
- iii. Once the respective manager and Public Affairs or Communication Specialist (when a video requires review) determine that a publication does not contain policy implications or does not discuss a sensitive topic/area, the manager and Public Affairs or Communication Specialist, when appropriate, signs the Publication Transmittal Record and returns it to the NWRC Program Specialist copying the WS lead/corresponding author. The publication can then be submitted to the publication outlet.
- iv. Publications with policy implications or that deal with sensitive topics/areas will be submitted by the WS lead/corresponding author to their respective WS Management Team members for further review.
- (a) The WS lead/corresponding author may edit the manuscript to remove policy statements (such statements commit the Program, Agency, Department, or Government to action) or address a sensitive topic/area. Upon further review and approval by the WS Management Team member, the manuscript may be submitted for publication.
 - (b) If policy statements or addressing a sensitive topic/area were intended, then the WS Management Team member will forward the manuscript for further review and clearance to the Program, Agency, or Department, as appropriate. The manuscript may only be

submitted for publication once cleared and approvals have been obtained by the WS Management Team member to the WS lead/corresponding author.

IV. WS Lead/corresponding author will submit completed Publication Transmittal Records to the NWRC Program Specialist, who will track and file the process for all WS publications. Records will be retained by NWRC per WS Standard Operating Procedures and the records retention guidelines.

7. DEFINITIONS

- a. Publication: Includes scientific manuscripts, books and book chapters, conference proceedings, technical papers, magazine articles, videos, storyboards, and other works.
- b. Lead/Corresponding author: A lead author is typically the first-named author of a publication and often the individual who has initiated the research topic, conducted the research, and taken the lead in writing/editing. A corresponding author is typically the person who submits the article to the publishing outlet and works with the editorial staff to make revisions and see the article through publication. For purposes of this directive, the WS lead/corresponding author is the individual who coordinates efforts for all WS coauthors and initiates the WS review process.
- c. Digital Object Identifier (DOI): A unique and permanent string or handle assigned to articles, books, and other works. DOIs make it easier to catalog and retrieve works.
- d. Sensitive topics/areas: Publications can report findings and interpretations that are highly visible and of wide interest. As a general guide, the following designations could represent a sensitive topic/are and might require additional review as described in Section 6.a.III.ii and include:
 - Potential to attract media attention
 - Represents a significant scientific advancement
 - Significantly affects existing or future USDA policy
 - Potential trade implications
 - Reports on Dual Use Research (research that is intended to provide benefit, but which could be misapplied to harm) or gain-of-function research (e.g., use of enhanced potential pandemic pathogens).
- e. Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID): Type of Open Researcher and Contributor ID required for all authors of digital scientific research assets. Contact WS NWRC Information Services Unit at NWRC.Library@usda.gov for information on how to obtain an ORC ID.

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8. SCOPE

This directive applies to all employees of Wildlife Services.

9. REFERENCES

- a. USDA DR-1410-001; Publications Review and Clearance Policy
- b. USDA DR-1020-006; Public Access to Scholarly Publications and Digital Scientific Research Data
- c. USDA DR-1074-001; Scientific Integrity
- d. APHIS Guidelines for External Publication Review and Clearance

10. ATTACHMENT

- 1. Publication Transmittal Record

Jessica Fantinato
Deputy Administrator



PUBLICATION TRANSMITTAL RECORD
USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services

Title: _____

Proposed Outlet: _____

QA # (if applicable, otherwise N/A): _____

Author Signatures: Signature confirms that each Wildlife Services (WS) author has reviewed the manuscript for submission and agrees that the contents are accurate. As appropriate, signature also confirms that a WS author's leadership has seen and been provided an opportunity to comment on the manuscript. The WS lead/corresponding author's signature confirms that all external authors have reviewed and approve submission of the manuscript.

Wildlife Services Authors (in order of manuscript authorship)	Certified Digital Signature (Wildlife Services authors only)

Video Publications
(Require LPA Review)

(APHIS LPA Certified Digital Signature)

REVIEW: NWRC Assistant Director, WS Assistant Regional Director, WS National Program Coordinator, or WS OSS Director, as appropriate.

This manuscript represents USDA policy or addresses a sensitive topic/area:

☐ **NO**
(no further signature required)

☐ **YES - requires elevation to WS
management team member**

(WS Management Team Member Digital Signature, if required)