

# Wildlife Services Directive

2.445  
April 19, 2016

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## USE OF TRAINED DOGS IN WILDLIFE SERVICES ACTIVITIES

### 1. PURPOSE

This Directive establishes standards and responsibilities for Wildlife Services' (WS) use of trained dogs to assist in accomplishing wildlife damage management activities.

### 2. REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

This directive replaces WS Directive 2.445 dated July 2, 2013.

### 3. POLICY

It is WS policy that trained dogs shall only be used by authorized personnel, including volunteers and contractors to conduct specific WS functions. It is permissible for WS personnel to use employee-owned or government-owned trained dogs in accomplishing WS missions where it is safe and legal to do so. Government-owned and employee-owned trained dogs should accompany the WS employee/handler on official duty only when there is an operational need.

State Directors may require more restrictive standards for use of trained dogs to accomplish wildlife damage management activities within their area of responsibility, as long as such standards do not conflict with WS national policy. State-specific requirements shall be provided in writing to the appropriate Regional Office.

- a. State Directors shall maintain a list of personnel who use trained dogs in the conduct of their official duties.
- b. Use of contract or volunteered dogs (e.g., dogs not directly owned by WS or its employees) will be approved on a case-by-case basis by the applicable State Director. In such instances the contracted or volunteer dog-handler must sign a form acknowledging that they will abide by WS Directive 2.445. In such instances the dog-handler must follow WS' guidelines and a WS employee must accompany the contract/volunteer dog handler throughout the operation.
- c. When selecting methods for feral swine removal, State Directors will decide on a case-by-case basis if dogs are the best method for detection/removal. Approvals will be noted in an email between the State Director and the Regional Office. Approvals need to be specific for the activity and the dog handler involved, but can be for the duration of an activity or project.
- d. Dogs will not be allowed to intentionally kill animals. When the objective is removal, animals

will be euthanized as quickly as possible via a mortal gunshot. Mortal gunshot is the only approved means of euthanasia. Knives, spears, or other devices sometimes used for hunting feral swine are prohibited as means to dispatch an animal. Animals intended to be captured alive (e.g., research, Judas operations) will be protected from trained dogs once handlers are onsite.

#### 4. BACKGROUND

WS personnel often use trained dogs as a wildlife damage management tool to include wildlife hazing, wildlife and invasive species detection, animal retrieval, decoying, trailing, and animal scent and sign detection.

#### 5. DEFINITIONS

Trained dog: a dog that is proficient in a specific set of skills necessary to perform specific functions in a manner that is responsive to its handler's commands.

#### 6. IMPLEMENTATION

a. WS personnel on official duty who use trained dogs must be in compliance with WS Directive 2.210, Compliance with Federal, State and Local Laws and Regulations.

b. Functions Performed by Trained Dogs: WS personnel may use trained dogs to perform specific functions to assist WS activities, including:

(1) Wildlife Hazing: To disperse birds or other wildlife away from sites where they can damage property or other resources, where they pose threats to human health and safety, or where the birds or other wildlife could be harmed due to oil or other contaminant spills, industrial operations, etc.

(2) Brown Tree Snake (BTS) Detection: To inspect cargo, vessels, aircraft, freight, household goods, and associated facilities and environments to detect BTS. Dogs trained in BTS detection shall adhere to training and other protocols validated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, National Detector Dog Training Center. WS personnel and snake detection dogs shall be subject to annual proficiency testing.

(3) Animal Detection: To alert WS personnel to the presence of scent and sign of certain target species (e.g., nutria, beaver, feral swine) in a search area, allowing WS personnel to determine if further management activities (e.g., trapping) are warranted. When conditions allow, trained dogs can also serve as removal aids by detecting, scent trailing, and baying such species (e.g., nutria, feral swine) so that they can be humanely euthanized.

(4) Animal Retrieval: To retrieve target animals in order to assist WS personnel with recovery of animals. Dogs trained in wildlife retrieval shall be trained to be "soft-mouthed," (i.e., do not deliver a crushing bite to the retrieved animal) so that, where a retrieved target animal is still alive, it can be humanely euthanized by WS personnel.

(5) Decoying: To decoy (attract) targeted wildlife species into shooting range.

(6) Trailing: To scent trail and pursue certain animals, to facilitate live capture or lethal removal. Animals are typically bayed or held by the dogs and then captured by use of immobilizing drugs or capture devices (e.g., net gun, catch pole) or humanely dispatched. Dogs trained in trailing animals shall be managed wherever possible to prevent the dogs from attacking or otherwise injuring the target animals following administration of immobilizing drugs. Dog handlers will be encouraged to use protective equipment for dogs while working with feral swine.

c. Trained Dogs: WS personnel shall not allow trained dogs to have physical contact with or in any way attack, bite or kill animals that are restrained in a trap or any other device. When trained dogs are used, handlers will be at the site of encounters between animals and dogs as soon as possible to minimize stress and reduce potential injury. If WS personnel are unable to prevent a trained dog from repeatedly making contact with a restrained animal, WS personnel must immediately intervene and discontinue use of that dog.

d. Dogs-in-Training: WS personnel shall ensure a dog-in-training is muzzled and controlled on a leash when it is near a restrained animal. If the dog-in-training attacks or attempts to attack a restrained animal, WS personnel must immediately stop the interaction. WS personnel must discontinue use of dogs-in-training that repeatedly attempt to physically contact restrained animals.

e. Necessary Care: WS personnel shall ensure trained dogs used in wildlife damage management activities receive housing, food, water, medical care, and are properly licensed and vaccinated according to applicable state and local laws.

f. Safe Transportation: WS personnel shall ensure dogs are provided a safe transport box. The box shall provide enough shade and ventilation during warm months to keep dogs cool. During cool months, insulation and/or reduced ventilation shall be used to keep dogs comfortable.

g. Control and Monitoring: Dog handlers shall control or monitor their trained dogs at all times. A trained dog is considered under control when the dog responds to the command(s) of the dog handler by exhibiting the desired or intended behavior as directed. Dog handlers shall ensure trained dogs do not pose a threat to humans or domestic animals, or cause damage to property. Further, dog handlers (whether WS employees or contractors) shall employ as needed various methods and equipment to monitor and/or control dogs, including, but not limited to:

- (1) muzzles;
- (2) protective vests and collars;
- (3) electronic training collars;
- (4) harnesses;
- (5) leashes;
- (6) whistles;
- (7) voice commands;
- (8) global positioning system (GPS);
- (9) telemetry collars;
- (10) and identification collar/contact information.

h. Reimbursement for dog related expenses.

State Directors have the authority to provide reimbursement for employee-owned trained dogs that are used to assist in official WS activities and are an essential tool for the employees' operational duties. Employees may be reimbursed a maximum amount of \$850 per year for expenses related to ownership of the dog, including routine veterinary care and vaccinations, food, treats, shelter, cages, and kennels. Employees must submit claims for reimbursement on Standard Form (SF) 1164 "Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business. The reimbursement limit will be reviewed periodically to adjust for potential cost of dog ownership increases. State Directors shall determine the proper reimbursement amount for each employee. In addition to providing employees reimbursement, State Directors can authorize the use of project funds to cover necessary operational dog related expenses including but not limited to:

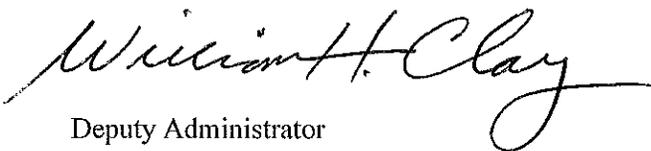
- (1) veterinary care for work related injuries;
- (2) safe transportation boxes;
- (3) protective gear for dogs;
- (4) dog training equipment and materials;
- (5) and additional items used for control and monitoring trained dogs listed above in section 6g.

## 7. APPLICABILITY

This directive applies to all WS personnel including federal and non-federal employees, volunteers, interns, and individuals conducting official WS duties.

## 8. REFERENCES

WS Directive 2.210 (10/27/09), Compliance with Federal, State, and Local Laws and Regulations, [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage/directives/2.210\\_compliance\\_fed\\_state\\_local\\_laws.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/directives/2.210_compliance_fed_state_local_laws.pdf)



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