

# Wildlife Services

Protecting People  
Protecting Agriculture  
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2012

# North Dakota



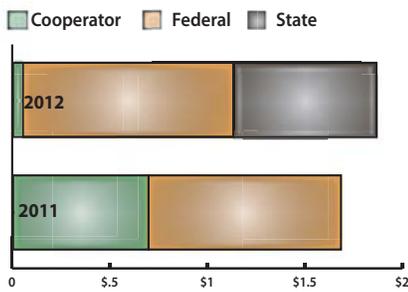
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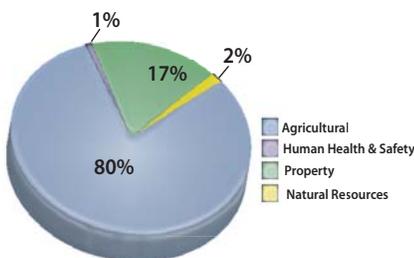
## Major Cooperators

- North Dakota Department of Agriculture
- North Dakota Game and Fish Department
- North Dakota Water Commission
- North Dakota Board of Animal Health
- North Dakota Aeronautics Commission
- North Dakota Association of Counties
- North Dakota Department of Health
- North Dakota Lamb and Wool Producers
- North Dakota Stockmen's Association
- North Dakota Water Resources Districts
- National Sunflower Association
- USDA/APHIS/Veterinary Services
- U.S. Forest Service

## Total Funding (Millions)



## Resources Protected % of Total Funds



## USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in North Dakota

Every day, the Wildlife Services (WS) program in North Dakota helps citizens, organizations, industries, and Government agencies resolve conflicts with wildlife to protect agriculture, other property, and natural resources, and to safeguard human health and safety. WS' professional wildlife biologists and specialists implement effective, selective, and responsible strategies that value wildlife, the environment, and the resources being protected. WS manages wildlife damage according to its public trust stewardship responsibilities as a Federal natural resource management program. WS supports the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, based on the principle that wildlife resources are owned collectively and held in trust by Government for the benefit of present and future generations.

WS protects property and reduces human health and safety risks at airports, homes, and along roadways. The program also protects people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases, guards many natural resources, such as timber, from wildlife damage and educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. Specific projects conducted by WS-North Dakota include managing damage caused by coyote and beaver; managing blackbird damage to sunflowers; reducing waterfowl damage to grain crops; sampling and monitoring for wildlife diseases; assisting with wildlife hazards management at civilian and military airports; and managing damage in urban environments.

Agriculture is the dominant sector of North Dakota's economy. The State's 31,000 farmers and ranchers lead the nation in the production of various grain crops.

## Applying Science and Expertise to Help the Public

WS frequently provides information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this technical assistance can be provided in person, by telephone or through the mail or internet. During 2012, WS delivered technical advice and recommendations to more than 1.6 million people.

In most cases, landowners and resource managers use technical information and other methods to reduce damage on their properties. WS' extensive educational program helps North Dakotans with their specific wildlife conflicts. WS provided more than 1,250 site visits, personal consultations, and instructional sessions to individuals throughout the State. Informational leaflets and free loans of equipment, such as propane cannons and electronic fencing units, helped individuals solve their specific problems. WS provided instruction on the safe, effective, and humane use of all loaned equipment.

WS also implements solutions on-site, through direct management assistance, when the wildlife-related problem is complex and cannot be safely or effectively resolved by others. WS' National Wildlife Research Center conducts scientific research and assessments to refine methods and develop new science-based solutions to wildlife challenges. WS applies and recommends an integrated wildlife damage management approach that incorporates biological, economic, public, environmental and other information into decision making. WS implements a wide range of damage management activities. The following examples highlight WS' role in protecting resources in North Dakota.

**Protecting Crops and Other Agricultural Resources**—Blackbirds cause millions of dollars in losses annually to sunflower and grain crops in North Dakota. WS provides integrated blackbird damage management by loaning nonlethal management equipment (noise-making cannons and pyrotechnic frightening devices) to farmers and assists with blackbird dispersal from sunflower fields and roost sites.

In cooperation with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (NDGF), WS assists farmers who experience goose damage to wheat, soybeans, and other crops. WS also provides frightening devices, such as propane cannons, pyrotechnics, and mylar flagging.



United States Department of Agriculture  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

**Protecting Livestock from Predation**—Despite producers' best efforts to protect their livestock, thousands of domesticated farm animals are killed by predators each year. The most recent reports by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) for cattle (2011) and sheep and goat (2010) indicate predation on more than 647 thousand head of livestock annually, resulting in combined losses of nearly \$138 million. Producers often turn to WS for assistance in reducing and preventing further predation.

NASS reports indicate that coyote predation in North Dakota was responsible for \$1.1 million in cattle and sheep losses. Research has shown that economic impacts from predation on livestock could be 2-3 times higher in the absence of livestock protection. WS is recognized by the livestock industry and State agencies as the lead in managing predator damage to livestock. Livestock producers rely on several non-lethal tactics for reducing predation including guard animals, improved husbandry, fencing, and frightening devices. However, when non-lethal methods prove ineffective WS conducts direct management actions to resolve site-specific problems.

**Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports**—Wildlife strikes cause more than 760,000 hours of aircraft down time and cost the nation's civil aviation industry approximately \$700 million annually. American military aircraft sustain losses exceeding \$10 million annually. WS has assisted the Nation's airports for decades and collaborates closely with the Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Defense, and other Government agencies.

WS-North Dakota has completed comprehensive wildlife hazard assessments and also helped develop wildlife hazard management plans for the State's eight major civilian airports and for one military airport. Annually, WS trains airport employees on the best management practices for minimizing wildlife/aircraft encounters.

**Monitoring and Controlling Wildlife Diseases**—WS works with Federal and State wildlife, health, and agriculture agencies to monitor and conduct surveillance for diseases in wildlife that could impact agriculture or human health. WS-North Dakota is one of 33 States assigned a full-time staff wildlife disease biologist, who conducts wildlife disease surveillance and monitoring activities. In cooperation with NDGF, North Dakota's Board of Animal Health and Health Department, and USDA-APHIS-Veterinary Services, WS conducts surveillance and monitoring activities for diseases such as avian influenza, sylvatic plague, tularemia, and rabies.

**Reducing the Negative Impacts of Feral Swine**—Feral swine, an invasive species, are prolific breeders and thrive in rural, suburban and urban habitats. By 2012, their populations had expanded to at least 38 States, numbering approximately 5 million animals. This expanding population and distribution is associated with property damage and negative impacts on public health, domestic animal health, crop production, and natural resources. Currently, the total aggregate cost of damage is estimated to be \$1.5 billion annually, with at least \$800 million related to direct costs to agriculture.

Since 2007, WS-North Dakota has been actively involved with feral swine elimination and disease surveillance. WS is part of a multi-agency feral swine working group that includes the Board of Animal Health, NDGF, USDA-Forest Service, and USDA-APHIS-Veterinary Services. WS assists the State Board of Animal Health with investigations when feral swine sightings are reported and operations to eliminate confirmed feral swine populations.

**Protecting Multiple Resources from Beaver Damage**—Beaver historically have been a valuable economic and natural resource. During the past 20 years their populations have increased throughout the United States due to lower demand for beaver products and subsequent decreases in recreational trapping. Beaver presence increases wetland habitats, but in some areas that can be problematic. In North Dakota, WS responds to beaver damage to trees, roadways, and crops by working on properties for private landowners, highway departments, and water resource districts. Each year documented beaver damage to various resources ranges between \$500,000 to more than \$1,000,000. Certified explosive specialists also use binary explosives to remove beaver dams in order to restore normal water flow in streams and creeks.

### **Looking to the Future**

WS continues to provide the citizens of North Dakota with safe, effective, and responsible management assistance for a variety of wildlife damage problems. The potential for human-wildlife conflicts likely will increase and WS' ability to respond will depend on the availability of personnel and resources, as well as legislative authorities to support these activities. WS-North Dakota is receiving increasing numbers of requests for assistance with problems associated with wildlife at airports, coyotes and beaver in urban/suburban areas, wolves, Canada geese, and cormorants.

WS strives to meet the requests for assistance within the constraints of its existing resources and capabilities so that all citizens have access to program services. Collaborative, partner-based approaches will be increasingly important among natural resource, agriculture, and health agencies to meet public needs.

### **Wildlife Services Funding in North Dakota**

In addition to receiving Federally allocated funds, WS also receives funding from program beneficiaries such as agricultural producers, airports, individual citizens, businesses, organizations, and other Federal, State, and local Government agencies. See charts for sources of funding and resources protected.

#### **Top 5 Major WS Assistance Activities in North Dakota**

- Protecting livestock from coyote predation
- Protecting agricultural crops from damage caused by blackbirds and Canada geese
- Protecting bridges, roads, timber, crops, and natural resources from beaver damage
- Assessing and reducing public health threats from wildlife diseases
- Assessing and reducing wildlife hazards at airports

#### **Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to North Dakota**

- Improvements in surveillance and detection of feral swine
- Evaluating and monitoring wildlife for diseases
- Developing tools/methods to reduce blackbird damage to sunflowers
- Quantifying and assessing the damage caused by Canada geese to grain crops
- Evaluating the effectiveness of wildlife damage management to reduce coyote damage to livestock