

# Wildlife Services

Protecting People  
Protecting Agriculture  
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2012

# Oklahoma



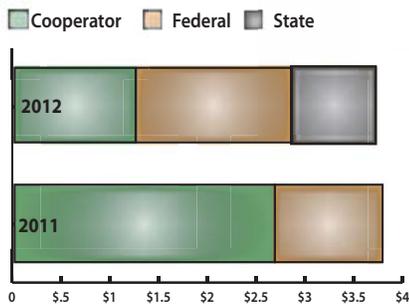
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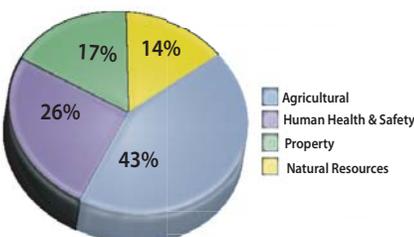
## Major Cooperators

- Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry
- Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
- Oklahoma Conservation Commission
- Tinker Air Force Base
- Altus Air Force Base
- Vance Air Force Base
- Will Rogers World Airport
- Tulsa International Airport
- Oklahoma counties and cities

## Total Funding (Millions)



## Resources Protected % of Total Funds



## USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Oklahoma

Every day, Wildlife Services (WS) Oklahoma 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.

## 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.

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.

In 2012 WS assisted with roosting purple martins congregating en masse for migration at the Oklahoma City Memorial, and important public memorial for the victims of the 1995 terrorist act. Bird droppings caused problems for visitors and were permanently etching the Memorial's bronze metal structures. WS-Oklahoma successfully used a nonlethal noise and visual harassment strategy, which did not disrupt the Memorial's sanctity, yet encouraged the birds to use another staging site.

**Protecting Crops and Other Agricultural Resources**—In Oklahoma, crows cause significant damage to crops, including pecans, which can post cash receipts as high as \$25 million. Crow damage to crops is increasing dramatically each year. Currently, WS-Oklahoma provides limited direct and technical assistance to pecan and other growers, with support from the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (ODAFF).

**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 of more than 647 thousand head of livestock annually, resulting in combined losses of at least \$138 million. Producers often turn to WS for assistance in reducing and preventing further predation. The integrated approach implemented by WS includes recommendations that are applied by the producers and, in many cases, operational wildlife management implemented by WS.

NASS surveys in 2010 showed Oklahoma ranchers suffered losses to predators of about 13,900 head of cattle and calves valued at more than \$6.9 million and more than 3,700 sheep and lambs. Unfortunately, these losses are felt most acutely by small ranchers and farmers. Research suggests losses could be two to three times higher in the absence of an effective livestock protection program such as that conducted by WS-Oklahoma.



United States Department of Agriculture  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

**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 provided assistance to 772 airports in 2012, including advice, training, on-site evaluations and assessments of wildlife hazards, and direct operational management to reduce wildlife strikes.

To help reduce wildlife hazards on civilian airports and military bases, WS-Oklahoma works with adjacent landfill sites to reduce their attractiveness to gulls, raptors, and blackbirds. WS collaborates with investigative agencies, such as the National Transportation Safety Board, in collecting samples from aircraft wreckage in suspected wildlife strikes. This valuable data, submitted for laboratory analysis, helps determine if wildlife were involved in accidents, and if so, the species responsible.

**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. The program's Wildlife Disease Biologists act as WS' first responders through the National Wildlife Disease Program's Surveillance and Emergency Response System (SERS). Information obtained through disease surveillance in wildlife populations enables agencies to better prepare for and respond to outbreaks and emergencies. WS-Oklahoma conducts sampling and monitoring for swine brucellosis, tularemia, plague, and other diseases. WS also assists landowners with rabid skunks through direct operations to remove sick skunks and by providing information to individuals about how to keep children and pets safe.

**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. 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.

Oklahoma's rapidly growing feral swine population causes serious damage to crops, livestock, lawns, and property. Feral swine can transmit diseases such as pseudorabies, a threat to domestic livestock, and brucellosis, which puts humans and animals at risk. They also threaten wildlife due to competition for food and habitat destruction.

**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 this can be problematic.

Beaver now occur in most Oklahoma watersheds, and populations are increasing statewide. WS-Oklahoma documented more than 17,000 beaver conflicts with resources statewide in FY 2012. Most requests involve damage to roadways, bridges, flood control structures, agriculture, and forest resources, and flooding of municipal sewer and water facilities. WS-Oklahoma

established a beaver damage management program under a cooperative services agreement with ODAFF with State, county, and private funding. Assistance is provided to ODAFF, Oklahoma Conservation Commission, city and county governments, soil and water conservation districts, private landholders, and others preventing millions of dollars in additional beaver damage. WS-Oklahoma personnel are trained and certified in the safe, effective use of explosives to remove beaver dams.

### **Looking to the Future**

WS continues to provide Oklahomans with safe, effective, and responsible management assistance for a variety of wildlife damage problems.

In Oklahoma, WS is receiving increasing numbers of requests for assistance with problems associated with feral swine, crows, beaver and other wildlife. Public safety is a concern for wildlife managers, particularly at airports. Additional attention must be given to this very specialized area of work. Oklahoma contains large population of resident Canada geese, which can cause conflicts in urban settings and on farms throughout the state. WS-Oklahoma is evaluating the potential of nonlethal harassment to minimize crop damage and urban conflicts. WS strives to meet the demands for assistance within the constraints of its existing resources 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 Oklahoma**

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 Oklahoma**

- Reducing beaver damage to agriculture, property and human health/safety
- Assessing and reducing wildlife hazards at civil/military aviation
- Reducing feral swine damage to crops, animal health and natural resources
- Protecting livestock from predation
- Assessing and reducing public health threats from wildlife diseases such as rabies, swine brucellosis, pseudorabies

### **Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Oklahoma**

- Developing tools/methods to reduce beaver damage to multiple resources
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Developing tools/methods to reduce bird damage to crops
- Evaluating and monitoring feral swine for swine brucellosis and other diseases
- Developing improved tools/methods to reduce predator damage to livestock