

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2015

Nebraska



Contact Information:

Timothy Veenendaal, Nebraska
Wildlife Services State Director
5940 S. 58th Street
Lincoln, NE 68516-3639

Phone: (402) 434-2342
FAX: (402) 434-2339
Toll-Free Number: 1-866-4USDAWS
(1-866-487-3297)
timothy.b.veenendaal@aphis.usda.gov
www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-damage/

USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Nebraska

Every day, the Wildlife Services (WS) program in Nebraska 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 manages wildlife damage according to its public trust stewardship responsibilities as a Federal natural resource management program. The program 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.

In Nebraska, WS works to protect resources and reduce human health and safety risks in urban, suburban, and rural settings such as airports, business facilities, and private property. It protects livestock from predation and wildlife-borne diseases while assisting other agencies with disease monitoring. WS protects threatened and endangered species during nesting season and assists agricultural producers to reduce bird damage at feedlots.

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. During 2014, WS delivered technical advice and recommendations to more than 1.6 million people.

In Nebraska, 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 supports local universities in an effort to help develop and find answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the public is benefiting from the latest technology and solutions.

Protecting Crops and Other Agricultural Resources — Agricultural landscapes provide abundant wildlife habitat. WS assists farmers and ranchers throughout the United States to protect crops and other agricultural resources and facilities from damage caused by coyote, fox, waterfowl, deer, wild turkeys, beaver, and other species.

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.

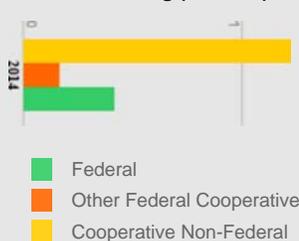
The importance of cattle feeding to Nebraska's economy runs deeper than in other states. Nearly five million head are finished and marketed in Nebraska, a state with a population of 1.8 million residents. In 2014 Nebraska became the leading state for all cattle on feed, numbering 2,450,000 head. Nebraska has the top three beef cow counties in the U. S., including the national's top cow county, Cherry County, with nearly 166,000 cows. Coyotes, red foxes, mountain lions, and bobcats inflict losses, sometimes significant. In Nebraska, predators kill an estimated 5,500 head of livestock valued at \$1.2 million. Small farmers in Nebraska are most impacted and losses would be at least double without effective predation management.

WS-Nebraska recommends sound livestock management techniques and specialized fencing, lighting, and/or livestock guard animals whenever practical. WS' NWRC is working to develop new tools such as less-injurious coyote capture systems and improved electronic frightening devices. When nonlethal techniques fail to address damage, target-specific predator control from fixed-wing aircraft is employed but at an increased cost to cooperators.

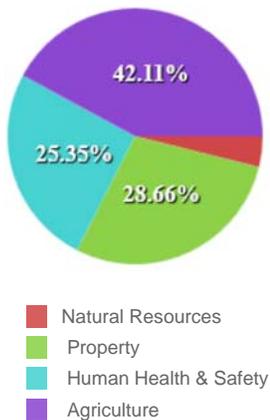
Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports Wildlife strikes cause more than 590,000 hours of aircraft down time and cost the nation's civil aviation industry approximately \$937 million annually. American military aircraft sustain losses exceeding \$10 million annually. WS has assisted the Nation's airports for decades and collaborates closely with the Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Defense, and other Government agencies. WS provided assistance to 839 airports in 2014.

WS-Nebraska provided technical assistance, training, and direct operational assistance to several civilian and military airports during 2014. On-site evaluations and comprehensive wildlife hazard assessments are completed before direct management work is done.

Total Funding (\$ Million)



Resources Protected
% of Total Funds



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Protecting Threatened and Endangered Species and Other Natural Resources — WS contributes to the conservation of species listed as threatened and endangered (T&E) through partnerships with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), State wildlife agencies, organizations, and landowners. During 2014, WS safeguarded populations of 162 T&E species nationwide.

WS-Nebraska conducted several projects to protect T&E piping plover and least terns nesting colonies along the Platte River from predation by skunks, raccoons, mink, fox, opossums, feral cats, and owls.

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).

Many WS-Nebraska projects involve protection against and/or monitoring of diseases such as histoplasmosis, plague, West Nile virus, and rabies. Rabies remains a potentially serious public health problem in Nebraska, despite decreased reported cases recently.

Protecting Nebraska from Invasive Species — Nonnative species that cause harm are collectively known as invasive species. Invasive species may prey upon, displace, or otherwise harm native species. Some also alter ecosystems, transport disease, interfere with crop production, or cause illnesses in animals and humans. Executive Order 13112 establishes Federal leadership responsibilities regarding invasive species.

Concentrations of invasive European starlings consume and contaminate livestock feed and potentially transmit diseases to livestock and humans. WS provides Nebraska producers with advice about managing damage. When requested and warranted, WS' certified pesticide applicators employ treated bait to reduce starling population to acceptable levels.

Pigeons throughout Nebraska damage property with acidic droppings and can spread disease. During 2014 WS worked with manufacturers, local Governments and others to reduce pigeon populations thus decreasing property damage and protecting human health.

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 effects 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.

In FY 2011 and FY 2012 WS worked with Nebraska Game and Parks and the Nebraska Department of Agriculture to remove the last feral swine herds in the state. Nebraska is now considered feral-swine free. In the future WS is committed to monitoring for and conducting disease surveillance in feral swine that may reoccur in the State.

Protecting Multiple Resources from Beaver Damage — Beaver historically have been a valuable economic and natural resource. Over 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.

WS-Nebraska receives increasing requests for assistance with beaver damage to timber and flooding of crops, roadways, railway

and bridges. In FY 2014, WS responded to beaver damage in 25 Nebraska counties, resolving complaints with either on-site management or technical assistance.

Looking to the Future

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

Public health and safety remain a significant concern: additional attention is needed to reduce bird-aircraft collisions; monitor for and manage wildlife diseases, including rabies; reduce starling and pigeon damage at ethanol facilities; and reduce flooding and beaver damage. WS-Nebraska will provide information and direct control, working with other Government agencies, to resolve wildlife issues. Collaborative, partner-based approaches will be increasingly important among natural resource, agriculture, and health agencies to meet public needs in the future.

Wildlife Services Funding in Nebraska

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 Nebraska

- Protecting livestock from predators
- Protecting bridges, roads, timber, crops, and natural resources from beaver damage
- Assessing and reducing wildlife hazards at airports
- Conserving threatened and endangered species
- Reducing impacts to feedlots by invasive European starlings and pigeons

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Nebraska

- Developing tools/methods to reduce predator damage to livestock
- Developing new methods for reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Evaluating new methods to reduce beaver damage to timber and agriculture crops
- Evaluating and monitoring skunks for rabies and wildlife transmission of rabies
- Develop new ways to protect Nebraska crops, dairies, feedlots, and structures from European starling damage

Major Cooperators:

- 34 Nebraska counties
- Metropolitan airport authorizes
- Nebraska Department of Agriculture
- Nebraska Department of Roads
- Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
- Military bases
- Public utilities
- City governments
- Public industries