

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2015

West Virginia

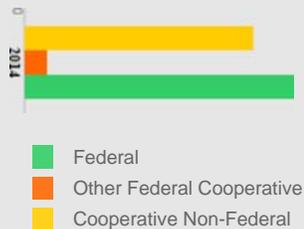


Contact Information:

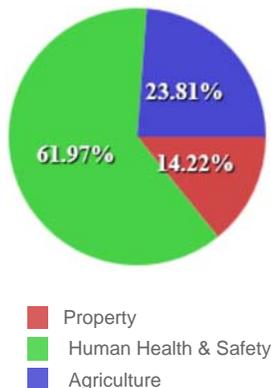
John Forbes, West Virginia
Wildlife Services State Director
730 Yokum Street
Elkins, WV 26241

Phone: (304) 636-1785
FAX: (304) 636-5397
Toll-Free Number: 1-866-4USDAWS
(1-866-487-3297)
john.forbes@aphis.usda.gov
www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-damage/

Total Funding (\$ Million)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in West Virginia

Every day, Wildlife Services (WS) in West Virginia helps citizens, organizations, industries, and Government agencies resolve conflicts with wildlife to protect agriculture, human health and safety, property, and natural resources. 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.

West Virginia is a diverse mix of urban and suburban settings, agricultural lands, and extensive forests, with the Appalachian Mountains dominating the State's eastern portion. Ecological and geographic diversity creates habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. WS works to protect property and reduce health and safety risks at airports, schools, and commercial facilities. It also protects people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases; agricultural resources from depredation; and educates the public about wildlife damage management. Specific projects include protecting livestock from predation, conducting surveillance for rabies in raccoons and skunks, and managing damage caused by white-tailed deer, resident Canada geese, pigeons, European starlings, vultures, and other wildlife.

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 assistance can be provided in person, by telephone or through the mail or internet. During 2014, WS delivered technical advice and recommendations to more than 1.6 million people.

WS-West Virginia assists livestock producers through hundreds of personal consultations, teaches university wildlife and agriculture classes, presents seminars through the State extension service, and partners with State agencies to disseminate technical information.

WS also implements solutions on-site through direct management assistance, when wildlife-related problems are 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.

The following highlights WS' role in protecting resources through damage management in West Virginia.

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. WS recommends an integrated approach to resolving predation through lethal and non-lethal methods, including animal husbandry techniques and guard animals. Operational wildlife management is implemented by WS when requested.

WS provides technical and operational assistance to livestock producers to reduce predation losses statewide through a cooperative service agreement with the State's Department of Agriculture. Since 1996, WS has helped reduce sheep predation on participating farms from an average of 28 lambs per farm to a current low of 0.61 for all livestock in 2014. WS continues to prevent significant predation losses on participating farms.

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, including advice, training, on-site evaluations and assessments of wildlife hazards, and direct operational management to reduce wildlife strikes.

Applying scientific expertise, WS provides technical assistance to West Virginia airports by conducting initial consultations, conducting year-long wildlife hazard assessments, developing management plans, and training airport personnel to reduce the risk of wildlife-aircraft collisions. Additionally, WS provides direct assistance by harassing and removing specific wildlife threats to aviation safety.



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 by reducing the impacts of predation and competition, consulting with the FWS, and developing and sharing information that contributed to conservation.

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). WS-West Virginia cooperates with the national disease program and the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) to conduct surveillance for a variety of wildlife diseases.

Protecting People and Animals from Rabies — Rabies poses a serious threat to public and animal health. Although human deaths from rabies are rare, the estimated public health costs associated with rabies detection, prevention, and control nationally exceed \$300 million annually. Since 1992 oral rabies vaccination (ORV) operations have distributed more than 155 million vaccine baits by air and ground across 19 States preventing the further spread of rabies variants.

In cooperation with selected eastern States and Canada, WS-West Virginia annually distributes approximately 1,000,000 ORV baits to immunize raccoons against rabies and stop the westward movement of raccoon variant rabies. In 2011, West Virginia was selected as the test site to evaluate a new oral vaccine (ONRAB). The ONRAB vaccine research results have shown promise and WS continues to participate in the required research needed to evaluate its safety and efficacy.

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.

WS has partnered with the WVDNR, the State Department of Agriculture, and the State Cooperative Extension Service to establish a program to respond to feral swine in the State. The goal is to quickly address local feral swine populations before they can establish breeding populations.

Responding to Emergencies — WS has a long history of responding to emergency requests for assistance from farmers, ranchers, and others. Increasingly, WS is asked to assist in responding to natural and manmade disasters such as hurricanes, floods, and oil spills. WS expertise has been instrumental in recovering wild and domestic animals, hazing wildlife away from contaminated areas, and conducting wildlife disease surveillance and emergency control. WS' National Wildlife Disease Program biologists have the necessary clearances and extensive training in the Incident Command System, and can be mobilized quickly.

Looking to the Future

WS will continue to provide the citizens of West Virginia with safe, effective, and responsible damage management assistance. Requests for assistance with problems associated with feral swine, urban/suburban coyotes, wildlife diseases (e.g., rabies), vultures, European starlings, beaver, and Canada geese continue to increase. Management of feral swine populations is a developing problem and WS-West Virginia is collaborating with State agencies to control or eliminate feral swine before populations become firmly established.

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 West Virginia

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 West Virginia

- Protecting livestock from coyote and vulture depredation
- Assessing and reducing wildlife hazards at airports
- Protecting public safety from high densities of urban waterfowl
- Assessing and reducing public health threats from large flocks of roosting European starlings and vultures in urban and suburban environments and at industrial locations
- Protecting the public, domestic pets, and livestock from rabies

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to West Virginia

- Developing tools/methods to reduce coyote damage to livestock
- Quantifying and assessing damage caused by expanding black vulture populations to livestock
- Surveillance and monitoring of raccoons and other wildlife for rabies
- Investigating the biology/ecology/behavior of coyotes
- Conducting research in support of ONRAB rabies vaccine registration

Major Cooperators:

- West Virginia Department of Agriculture
- West Virginia Department of Health & Human Resources
- West Virginia Division of Natural Resources
- West Virginia University
- West Virginia Extension Service
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service