

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2010

New Mexico



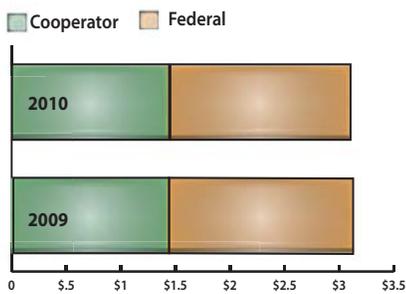
Contact Information:

Alan May, New Mexico
Wildlife Services State Director
8441 Washington NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113
Phone: (505) 346-2640
FAX: (505) 346-2627
Toll-Free Number: 1-866-4USDAWS
(1-866-487-3297)
alan.may@aphis.usda.gov
www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/

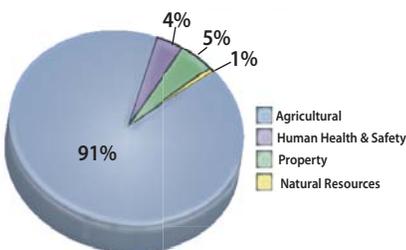
Major Cooperators

- New Mexico Department of Agriculture
- New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
- New Mexico Department of Transportation
- Taos Soil & Water Conservation District
- 28 County Governments
- New Mexico Cattle Growers
- New Mexico Wool Growers

Total Funding (Millions)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in New Mexico

Every day, residents, industries, organizations and agencies call on New Mexico Wildlife Services (WS) for help in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, natural resources, and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. WS' professional wildlife biologists respond to these requests with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

Livestock protection accounts for the majority of WS' management efforts in New Mexico. To protect New Mexico's livestock industry, WS assists livestock producers with an integrated wildlife damage management strategy.

New Mexico WS also protects field crops, fruits, nuts, turf, flowers and landscaping, buildings, roads, bridges, irrigation systems, and natural resources. WS educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management, and provides the citizens of New Mexico with safe, effective, and biologically sound assistance in resolving these wildlife conflicts. WS works to protect property and reduce human health and safety risks in urban, suburban and rural settings such as airports and schools. The program also protects people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases.

Specific projects conducted by New Mexico WS include monitoring for wildlife diseases including avian influenza, rabies, plague, tularemia, and classical swine fever and managing damage caused by beavers, mountain lions, pigeons, starlings, and other wildlife.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this technical assistance can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or direct assistance, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. WS uses an integrated wildlife damage management strategy that takes biological, economic, and other circumstances into consideration in order to make decisions influenced by scientific principles on how to address damage. To support this effort, WS conducts scientific research across the nation to apply the latest science and technology towards the development of solutions to new problems posed by wildlife. WS also analyzes the environmental effects of program activities to ensure that those activities have no significant adverse effects on the environment.

Protecting Agricultural Crops—WS employees working in the Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico protect crops, such as alfalfa, chili, and wheat from sandhill cranes and snow geese. By implementing an integrated wildlife damage management approach that includes the use of lure crops at a nearby Federal wildlife refuge and the selective placement of hunters to reinforce dispersal activities, WS employees reduce the damage caused by approximately 30,000 sandhill cranes and 50,000 snow geese. Prior to WS involvement, annual crop losses to sandhill cranes were estimated at more than \$100,000. Now, this highly successful cooperative effort among WS, the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish has eliminated virtually all damage caused by sandhill cranes in the WS protected areas in the Rio Grande Valley, making landowners more tolerant of these valuable wildlife species.

Protecting Livestock—In addition to severe weather and disease that cause economic losses to livestock producers, predation is also a cause for concern. Coyotes, bears, mountain lions and blackbirds cause significant loss for producers by attacking sheep and cattle, spreading diseases, and consuming and contaminating feed. The cattle and sheep industry in New Mexico generated more than \$1 billion in 2008 and accounted for



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

more than 32 percent of the cash receipts for all agricultural commodities combined. In 2010, the National Agriculture Statistics Service reported that predators throughout New Mexico killed 9,900 head of cattle, a \$5.3 million loss. In 2009, 8,200 sheep and lamb were lost to predation, a loss valued at \$ 901,000. Research suggests these losses would be two to three times higher without a livestock protection program in place.

WS cooperates with State agencies to conduct predator damage management activities in concert with the State's wildlife management goals and objectives. WS assures environmental impacts, with the program's implementation, are kept to a minimum. For example, although coyotes are the major livestock predator in the state, WS actions only impact about five percent of the coyote population in any one year. Accordingly, WS is able to provide livestock protection without significantly affecting the long-term viability of the predator species.

Enhancing Wolf Recovery through Livestock Protection—

Since the 1998 experimental reintroduction of the Mexican gray wolf, the population has slowly grown. WS actively participates with other Federal and State agencies to mitigate wolf predation on livestock. New Mexico WS Specialists conduct over 40 investigations of reported livestock depredation by wolves annually. The efficient and professional management of problem wolves builds public support and tolerance for their presence, and promotes conservation of wolves.

Managing Problems Associated with Feral Swine—Feral swine pose increasing concern for wildlife damage managers across the country. Five years ago, there were feral swine in only two New Mexico counties.

Today, there are feral swine in at least 15 counties. These prolific invasive, or non-native, animals can carry diseases to humans and domestic livestock. Their rooting and wallowing activities damage property including irrigation systems and riparian areas. They compete with native species for food and shelter, and prey upon ground nesting birds and other native wildlife. WS personnel in New Mexico assist private landowners and public land managers in reducing problems associated with feral swine by trapping and removing them. These swine are tested for a variety of diseases including plague, tularemia, pseudorabies, swine brucellosis, and classical swine fever. Test results are provided to agriculture producers, public health officials, and wildlife managers to aid in management decisions and increase public awareness.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—WS offers consultation and management assistance to commercial and military airports to assess wildlife conflicts and improve safety by reducing hazards associated with wildlife. Wildlife management and habitat modification at airports can help eliminate or reduce collisions between aircraft and birds or other wildlife.

Looking to the Future

As the Mexican wolf population grows, livestock predation and negative impacts on small rural economies have increased. WS actively participates in an adaptive management oversight process and, with the other agencies involved, makes management recommendations to mitigate these problems. The increase of feral swine populations in some areas of New Mexico is a major concern for agricultural producers, land management agencies, and wildlife refuge managers. WS is currently experiencing an increase in the number of calls requesting for assistance with feral swine damage management.

The increase in the number of rabies incidents is also of growing concern as the Arizona variant of fox rabies spreads eastward across the State. WS is working with State partners to increase surveillance, distribute educational materials, and develop a management strategy to help protect people, pets, and livestock.

Conflicts with coyotes in urban and suburban areas of New Mexico are increasing where they kill pets and other domestic animals, and pose safety risks to people and children. WS is being called upon more often to provide advice and direct assistance with these problems.

New Mexico Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving Federally allocated funds, WS also receives funding from agricultural producers, private individuals, businesses, or other Federal, State, and local government agencies and have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or play a role in wildlife damage management.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting livestock resources from predators
- Protecting crops from damage caused by sandhill cranes and geese
- Protecting crops, pasture, turf, and human health and safety from damage associated with prairie dogs
- Protecting the public, livestock, and wildlife from wildlife diseases
- Verifying depredation and implementing management actions associated with Mexican wolves

Top 2 WS Research Projects of Interest to New Mexico:

- Defining and reducing carnivore damage
- Improving rodent damage management methods, with emphasis on repellants, barriers, and attractants