Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2010

Ohio

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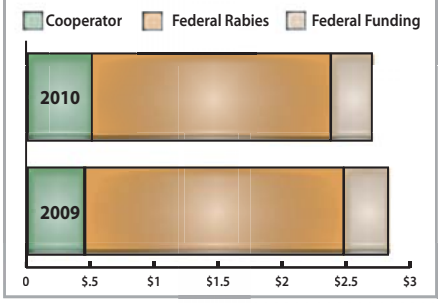
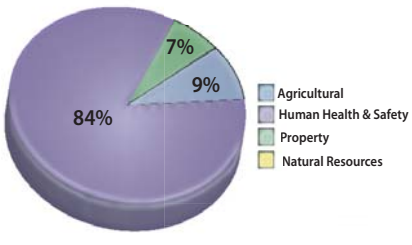
Major Cooperators

- Cattleman's, Pork Producers, Sheep Improvement, & Poultry Breeder Assoc.
- Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center
- Ohio State University Extension
- Ohio Division of Wildlife
- Ohio Departments of Agriculture, Natural Resources, Health, and Transportation
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Department of Defense
- Federal Aviation Administration

Total Funding (Millions)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Ohio

Every day, Ohio residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on Wildlife Services (WS) in Ohio for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

WS oversees a multitude of programs and projects within the state of Ohio. WS works on airports to prevent aircraft collisions with wildlife. WS also conducts disease surveillance throughout Ohio to monitor wildlife diseases that threaten both humans and livestock. WS continues to be a leader in the fight against rabies and, as a member of the Ohio Rabies Taskforce, works year round to stop the rabies virus from spreading further westward, and to, eventually, eliminate it from the state. Many Ohio livestock producers rely on WS to protect their sheep and cattle from problem predators such as coyotes and black vultures. WS also works with farmers to reduce crop and livestock feed depredation from blackbirds. Lastly, WS works with local communities to reduce human/wildlife conflicts in urban areas.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many 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 resolved safely by others. To support this effort, WS conducts scientific research across the nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure that the program benefits from the latest science and technology. The following are examples:

The Fight Against Rabies— The raccoon variant of rabies (RVR) entered Ohio in 1996 in the northeast counties adjacent to Pennsylvania. In an effort to halt the westward spread of this rabies variant across Ohio and into the Midwest, WS cooperated with other Federal, State and local agencies agencies to create a vaccination immune barrier from Lake Erie to the Ohio River. As part of the program, oral vaccination baits are dropped in this target area.

In July 2004 a rabies-positive raccoon was found 6.6 miles beyond the immune barrier, causing WS to create a contingency baiting zone. Enhanced surveillance was conducted to determine the extent of the outbreak. According to the Ohio Department of Health, from 2004 to 2010, 131 animals have tested positive for the raccoon variant of rabies. Many cases were found close to one another creating a "hot spot" and initiating intense Trap Vaccinate and Release (TVR) efforts each year from 2008 through 2010. During this time WS hand vaccinated over 10,000 raccoons and tested 2,214 animals for rabies. This caused a substantial decrease in RVR cases within the contingency zone (Fig. 1).

The contingency effort in Ohio is focused on creating a rabies-immune raccoon population in target counties to prevent the westward spread of RVR. These tools will also continue to be used into the future to protect the people of Ohio and further the goal of elimination of RVR from the state.

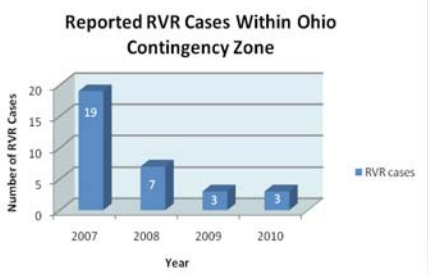


Figure 1. Decrease in reported RVR cases in the past four years that OH WS has used baiting, enhanced surveillance, and TVR operations in conjunction within the contingency area.

Managing Wildlife Hazards at Airports— Wildlife strikes with aircraft cost U.S. civil aviation more than $615 million annually and pose a serious hazard to flight crews and passengers. From 1990 to August 2010, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

reported more than 3,760 wildlife strikes resulting in $16,953,914 in damages to aircraft at Ohio airports. The FAA estimates only about 39 percent of all strikes are reported.

WS is internationally recognized for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts research to understand the nature of wildlife hazards at airports and develop management tools to reduce hazards. Current research efforts include studies in wildlife habitat management and alternative land-use at airports, movement patterns of hazardous bird species, avian radar as a tool to prevent wildlife strikes with aircraft, and exploiting wildlife anti-predator behaviors and visual ecology to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation.

Applying this scientific expertise, WS provided technical assistance to 38 civil and military Ohio airports in FY 2010. In Ohio, WS wildlife biologists and technicians provide on-site evaluations, comprehensive wildlife hazard assessments, management plans, and consultation on airport expansion and design to minimize wildlife hazards. In FY 2010 WS trained 42 airport personnel to reduce the risk of wildlife collisions with aircraft as well as providing operational support to reduce wildlife hazards at airports. Three full-time WS wildlife biologists are stationed at three airports in Ohio to monitor and reduce wildlife hazards through habitat management, behavior modification, and other methods.

Protecting Ohio's Livestock — The livestock industry is very important in Ohio. The National Agricultural Statistics Services (NASS) reported that Ohio was the largest sheep producing state east of the Mississippi River and ranked 13th in the United States for the number of sheep operations. The NASS estimated the value of 2009 Ohio sheep and lamb losses due to predators at $272,000 (NASS 2009) and 2010 cattle losses at $1,192,000 (NASS 2010). Loss figures do not include the cost of damage prevention activities.

WS biologists in Ohio help reduce livestock losses due to predation. WS recommends integrated wildlife damage management, which combines multiple methods to thwart predators. Examples include night penning, improved husbandry practices, guard animals, nonlethal harassment techniques, and predator population reduction. WS also offers educational seminars and workshops to help producers implement management techniques to minimize livestock losses on their own. In 2009, WS provided telephone and site visits to 39 producers experiencing loss of livestock by coyotes.
NWRC conducts extensive research and method development to prevent and reduce livestock predation by wildlife. Studies are underway to develop more effective and less injurious coyote capture systems, sound-activated aversive conditioning collars for coyotes, and improved electronic frightening devices. Coyote territorial behavior and population modeling studies are underway to support the development of reproduction suppression strategies for areas with high predation rates.

Looking to the Future

With more than 240 miles of Lake Erie shoreline, requests for WS to help reduce gull damage have increased. Studies show that the herring gull nesting population is nine times greater now than what is was 2 decades ago, and the number of nesting ring-billed gulls in the State has grown to more than three times their numbers in that same time period. The black vulture population grows annually along with the number of damage complaints. Local governments, residents, and producers continue to report large numbers of European starling and other blackbird roosts in cities, crops and dairy facilities, causing significant public safety issues and crop damage. Ohio's double-crested cormorant populations continue to rise, causing damage to the aquaculture industry and vegetative habitat used by State-listed threatened and endangered (T&E) species. Disease surveillance will continue targeting many diseases that threaten human health and safety as well as livestock production such as avian influenza, pseudorabies, chronic wasting disease, classical swine fever, and swine brucellosis.

WS is currently working closely with cooperators to protect State-listed T&E reptiles and birds. As part of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, protection of T&E species within the Lake Erie watershed will be the focus of recovery efforts by WS. This work will help manage predators that prevent certain T&E species from flourishing and will make sure these species have a place within our State ecosystem long into the future.

Ohio Wildlife Services Funding

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

NWRC Field Station in Ohio

For Research:
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Sandusky, OH 44870
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The primary focus of research at the NWRC Sandusky, OH, field station concerns wildlife hazards to aircraft. The field station, established in 1968, is located on a 6,000-acre, fenced facility operated by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Located near major populations of gulls, cormorants, and other species of concern to aviation, considerable field research on problem birds can be done within 60 miles of the station.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting the public, domestic pets, and livestock from rabies
- Protecting public safety and aircraft operations from wildlife hazards at airports
- Protecting livestock from black vulture and coyote predation
- Protecting public safety and property damage from Canada geese, gull, pigeon, starling, blackbird, and other wildlife damage
- Protecting human, health, and safety through wildlife disease surveillance

Top 3 WS Research Projects of Interest to Ohio:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Controlling wildlife vectors of rabies, pseudorabies and brucellosis
- Methods for enhancing surveillance of emerging wildlife diseases