

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2010

Vermont



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Major Cooperators

- Vermont Departments of Fish and Wildlife, Health, and Building and General Services
- Vermont Agencies of Agriculture and Transportation
- University of Vermont and private universities
- New England Waste Services of Vermont
- Burlington International Airport and State Airports
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Federal Aviation Administration
- Province of Quebec

USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Vermont

Every day residents, industries, and agencies call on Wildlife Services (WS) in Vermont for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from wildlife damage or threats. Vermont's relatively small size and continued population growth lead to frequent contact between people and wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective and humane strategies to resolve conflicts.

Wildlife Services' program in Vermont reflects the State's diverse wildlife and includes the protection of people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases; guarding natural resources from colonial water bird damage; reducing losses by game animals; and educating the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. The program also protects property and agriculture, and reduces human health and safety risks at airports, public buildings, and on State and private lands.

Specific projects conducted in Vermont by WS include: wildlife disease surveillance, including ceasing the northward expansion of raccoon rabies; reducing wildlife hazards at airports; managing damage caused by starlings at dairy farms; and protecting natural resources, and protecting against habitat loss and destruction on Lake Champlain islands.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS enables people to resolve wildlife conflicts by providing sound technical advice and through the loan of damage management equipment and materials. When more complex conflicts require specialized expertise, WS may refer customers to the appropriate public or private source of assistance or conduct site visits and provide direct assistance to resolve problems. To support these efforts, WS conducts scientific research across the nation to develop solutions to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure that WS and others benefit from the latest science and technology.

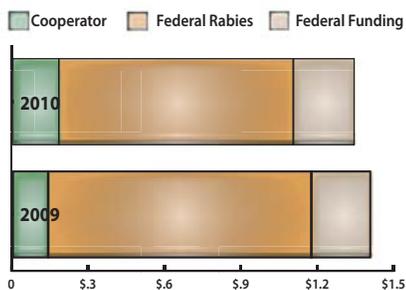
Protecting Agricultural Resources— WS assists dairy producers by addressing problems associated with large concentrations of European starlings and other birds. Damage occurs as birds consume and contaminate feed, which degrades feed quality, reduces milk production and may be responsible for disease transmission, such as salmonella. Coordinated with the Vermont Division of Pesticide Control, the program is comprised of technical assistance, recommendations for exclusion, modification of cultural practices and population management.

Protecting Health and Safety by Wildlife Disease Management—In Vermont in 2009, of approximately 400 animals tested for rabies, 16.1% were positive. Positive cases were confirmed in all five rabies vector species: raccoons, skunks, red fox, woodchucks, and bats. WS has operated a State, and Federally-funded toll-free Rabies Information and Referral Service (hotline) for 18 years. Staffed by WS biologists, the Hotline responded to more than 1,100 requests in 2010, providing accurate, consistent information and recommendations regarding rabies and other wildlife conflicts.

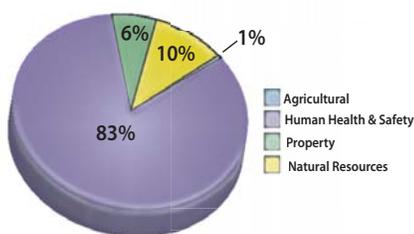
To prevent the northward spread of raccoon rabies, WS cooperated in the distribution of more than 525,000 baits containing oral rabies vaccine (ORV) across 3,000 square miles of northern Vermont. In its thirteenth year, the program has distributed more than 4 million vaccine-laden baits. Over 650 biological samples were collected from raccoons and skunks in the ORV zone in 2010 to determine bait uptake, program effectiveness and to monitor rabies movements.

Beginning in 2007, to enhance the effectiveness of the ORV zone, WS has been conducting trap, vaccinate, release (TVR) efforts along portions of the border with Canada. In 2010, Vermont WS vaccinated and released more than 1,900 animals to combat the spread of raccoon rabies. Since the TVR program started in 2007, more than 5,800 animals have been vaccinated and released.

Total Funding (Millions)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports —Bird strikes to airplanes cost the Nation's civil aviation over \$615 million annually and pose a significant hazard. Wildlife Services is recognized for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the industry both nationally and in Vermont. WS' National Wildlife Research Center conducts research to develop methods to reduce hazards to aviation and maintains a national strike database used to monitor trends and species of greatest concern to aviation.

WS is conducting a Wildlife Hazard Assessment at one Vermont airport and has provided operational and technical assistance to others across the state. WS maintained harassment and control efforts at one state airport in conjunction with integrated gull harassment activities at an adjacent landfill, which serves as a loafing and feeding area for gulls less than 3,500 feet from the airport. The integrated harassment and monitoring program has reduced gull presence at this airport by over 70%.

WS continues to provide consultations, direct assistance, assessments and training for the 10 State-managed airports and assists airports in acquiring Federal and State permits that allow designated personnel to immediately address bird and mammal hazards.

Protecting Natural Resources on Lake Champlain's State-managed Islands — WS continued cooperation with Vermont Fish and Wildlife in double-crested cormorant management activities to reduce nesting impacts to other waterbird species, restore colonial water bird diversity, and promote habitat recovery on Lake Champlain. WS' biologists met the program goal of eliminating double-crested cormorant reproduction on one of the main nesting islands. Habitat recovery efforts for Young Island have included soil preparation, tree plantings, and ring-billed gull management activities. Management efforts resulted in increased diversity of nesting waterbirds, including common terns and black-crowned night-herons.

Protecting Threatened or Endangered Species —To enhance recovery of the State-threatened eastern spiny soft shell turtle, WS conducted predator (raccoon, skunk and fox) trapping activities at recovery sites adjacent to Lake Champlain in 2010 and removed more than 40 known nest predators.

Reducing Damage from Canada Geese—An estimated 10,000 resident Canada geese occur in Vermont. Conflicts often develop as droppings accumulate, overgrazing damages landscaping, and aggressive geese attack humans. Each year, WS assists State residents and businesses with technical advice, equipment, and local population reduction.

Looking to the Future

WS strives to provide Vermont citizens with safe, effective solutions to diverse wildlife conflicts. It works with dairy farmers to implement effective strategies to reduce animal feed consumption, contamination, and health issues caused by birds at dairies. Wildlife diseases like rabies, avian influenza, chronic wasting disease and epizootic hemorrhagic disease represent emerging challenges that must be addressed locally and nationally. In addition, increasing populations of Canada geese, cormorants and gulls pose problems for property and natural resources.

Vermont 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 resolving wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities in 2010:

- Wildlife disease management and surveillance
- Staffing a rabies information and referral service hotline
- Protecting natural resources and property from double-crested cormorant damage
- Reducing on- and off-site safety hazards and property damage at landfills
- Protecting civil and military aviation from wildlife strikes

Top 4 WS Research Projects of Interest to Vermont in 2010:

- Investigating wildlife transmission of rabies
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Developing double-crested cormorant management methods to protect natural resources and private property
- Defining and reducing agricultural losses due to bear, deer, and turkey damage