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Inspection  
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## WILDLIFE SERVICES—SOUTH DAKOTA

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### USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in South Dakota

Every day, residents, industries, organizations and agencies call on South Dakota Wildlife Services (WS) 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.

South Dakota is characterized by a diverse landscape of river valleys, rolling prairie, and badlands. Vast open spaces occupied by farms, ranches, and small towns contrast with larger urban and suburban areas. A diversity of wildlife occupies both rural and urban areas, often causing conflicts with their human counterparts.

Wildlife Services assists with the management of wildlife conflicts that impact livestock producers, farmers, homeowners, airports and public land managers.

#### Top 2 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting human health and safety at airports
- Protecting sunflower and other grain crops from damage by blackbirds

#### Top 2 WS Research Projects of Interest to South Dakota:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Reducing blackbird damage to sunflower and feedlots
- Evaluation of early detection measures for wildlife-borne diseases



### Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

In many instances, WS enables others to resolve their wildlife conflicts by providing *technical assistance* which may include sharing information, advice, materials or equipment. Often this is accomplished by telephone. When resolving these conflicts is beyond the means of the individual, WS conducts *direct assistance* regarding wildlife at the damage site. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) also conducts *scientific research* across the nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure that WS utilizes state-of-the-art science and technology.

While WS conducts a wide range of operational and research activities, a few in-depth examples are provided to highlight WS' role in protecting important resources including livestock, crops, human health and safety, and private and publicly-owned property.

**Protecting Natural Resources**—Once considered the most endangered mammal in North America, the black-footed ferret

is being successfully reintroduced into areas of South Dakota. The South Dakota WS program initially provided assistance in protecting newly released ferrets from predators and continues to assist in the recovery efforts.

Specifically, WS has conducted surveillance to determine if sylvatic plague, which is fatal to the ferrets, is present in ferret recovery areas. In 2005 WS located a prairie dog colony near one of the successful black footed ferret colonies. WS assisted at that site with the treatment for fleas, which serve as vectors for plague. Prairie dog burrows over 5,000 acres were treated for fleas in nine prairie dog towns.

Whether this preventative treatment will ultimately shield the black-footed ferrets is unknown. WS continues to monitor movement of plague in the South Dakota county and is working with Tribal representatives to address areas where human health and safety is threatened by plague due to free-roaming pets and field rodents seeking winter refuge near homes.

**Protecting Crops**—Blackbirds are responsible for severe economic losses to sunflower and grain crops in the upper Great Plains every year. The NWRC field station in Bismarck, ND continues to work on the development of management tools to mitigate these losses. Since most damage occurs near cattail wetlands that are being used by roosting blackbirds, WS identifies these areas and treats them with an aquatic herbicide. This makes the areas less attractive to blackbirds while restoring valuable nesting sites for waterfowl.

**Protecting Air Travelers**—Every year, lives are endangered worldwide and billions of dollars are wasted when birds and other wildlife damage aircraft. Experts estimate that bird strikes with airplanes cost the civil aviation industry more than \$550 million annually in the United States.

WS is recognized nationally and internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS' NWRC field station in Sandusky, OH continues to conduct research to better understand the nature of wildlife hazards at airports, develop management tools to reduce these hazards at airports, and provide airport personnel with information to control or prevent these wildlife hazards. Studies are underway at several large airports where scientists evaluate habitat management practices and wildlife dispersal techniques. NWRC also maintains the National Bird Strike Database used by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and airports to monitor trends and wildlife species of greatest concern to aviation.

To better understand and address actual and potential wildlife hazards, WS has conducted one-year wildlife hazard assessments and developed wildlife hazard management plans for the Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Pierre, and Watertown airports in South Dakota. In 2006, WS assisted 10 airports and one U.S. Air Force base in South Dakota in an effort to reduce wildlife related hazards to aircraft.

**Wildlife Disease Surveillance**—In 2006, personnel from the North Dakota WS program participated in the nationwide avian influenza surveillance involving several species of waterfowl and shorebirds. This cooperative effort included a number of other agencies including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks. Highly pathogenic avian influenza, or bird flu, has emerged as one of the most-feared animal diseases worldwide, in part due to the potential that the disease could mutate into a virus that could lead to a pandemic. Currently the disease is serious in humans, who contract it through extremely close contact with poultry or other birds. WS participated in a national multi-agency effort for the early detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza in wild birds in North America and several foreign countries, an unprecedented effort by wildlife and natural resource agencies across the country.

**Information Transfer**—Commercial pesticide applicators that work with predator, rodent, and bird problems in South Dakota are trained by WS in wildlife identification and the proper uses of pesticides and other management tools. In addition to regular communication with sunflower producers, information and assistance with blackbird damage is provided annually through several meetings, workshops, and field days.

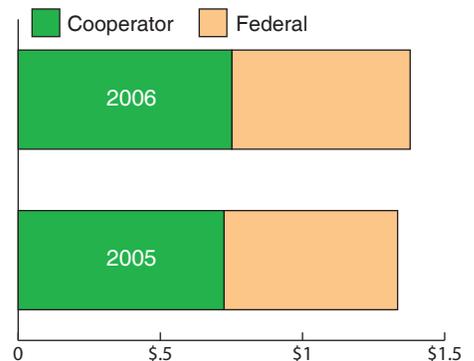
## Looking to the Future

Public health and safety is a growing concern for the South Dakota WS program, particularly at airports. Although WS has conducted assessments of wildlife hazards at several civilian airports, more systematic and thorough evaluations must be completed at all civilian and military airports in South Dakota.

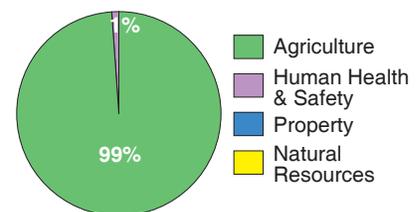
## South Dakota Wildlife Services Funding

Wildlife Services operates a cooperatively funded program. In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, the program also receives money from cooperators who have a vested interest in the program: 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 have an interest in wildlife damage management.

**Total Funding (Millions)**



**Resources Protected % of Total Funds**



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