

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2008

Massachusetts



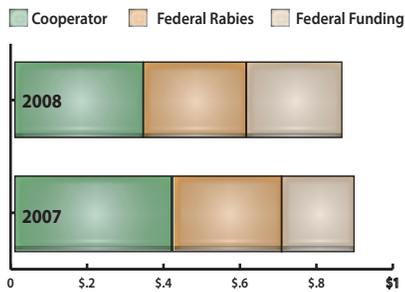
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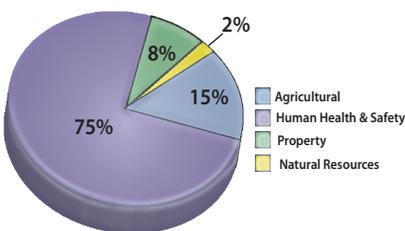
Major Cooperators

- Individual Massachusetts Agricultural Producers
- Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
- Massachusetts Division of Agricultural Resources
- Massport Airport Operations
- Westover Air Reserve Base
- Otis National Coast Guard Base
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health
- Barnstable County Department of Health and Environment
- Tufts University Animal Hospital
- Multiple Towns and Residential Associations for Canada Goose Control

Total Funding (Millions)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Massachusetts

Massachusetts is densely populated and ecologically diverse. On a daily basis, residents, industry professionals, organizations, and agencies call upon Wildlife Services (WS) in Massachusetts for help and expertise in protecting various resources. Assistance to protect agricultural resources is provided, but WS personnel are increasingly also asked for assistance to protect human health and safety, property, and natural resources from damage or threats caused by wildlife. In response WS provides technical assistance and implements biologically, environmentally, and socially sound wildlife damage management in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

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 cooperative on-site help, or direct assistance, to address complex wildlife problems that may be difficult or cannot be safely and effectively resolved by others. To support this effort, WS in Massachusetts collaborates with researchers of the WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Agricultural Resources—Although human population densities are increasing, agriculture remains economically and socially important to Massachusetts. WS continues to provide wildlife damage management expertise to diversified agricultural industries. These include vegetable, fruit, dairy, turf, ornamental, aquaculture, and livestock producers located in urban, suburban, and rural settings. Their produce is consumed locally or exported.

WS Massachusetts personnel collaborate with the University of Massachusetts Extension System to manage starling contamination of feed and water at dairy farms, which can cause salmonella infections in cattle and reduce milk production. In addition to cost savings from reduced contamination and scavenged feed, dairy and feed lot farmers who participate report improvements in the herd health and milk production.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—Wildlife collisions with aircraft cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$625 million annually and pose a hazard to flights and passengers. The WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts research to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation and air passengers. WS personnel continue to assist NWRC research projects on wildlife and wildlife habitat impacts on airport and aircraft safety. Additionally, WS biologists in Massachusetts provide training, wildlife hazard assessments, and direct wildlife management assistance at State airports through partnerships with airport management, State agencies, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and other Federal agencies. In FY 2008, WS conducted cooperative programs and technical consultations at four military and five State airports. In addition, the WS Massachusetts program conducted two wildlife hazard management workshops for airport personnel, and a wildlife hazard management presentation at the New England Regional FAA Airports Conference.

Protecting Human Health & Safety from Rabies—WS continues to support the Cape Cod Oral Rabies Vaccination (CCORV) program in southeastern Massachusetts in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and the Barnstable County Department of Health and the Environment, and the Barnstable County Rabies Task Force. Many local town officials, the Senior Environmental Corp. and Ameri Corp., as well as private volunteers are also directly involved. The program was designed to prevent the spread of rabies to Cape Cod, a heavily populated tourist destination. Cooperative



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

activities include oral rabies vaccine (ORV) bait distribution, surveillance activities, training, and small-scale research studies.

In response to a March 2004 Cape Cod rabies outbreak, enhanced rabies surveillance was conducted to facilitate rabies management decision making. WS and CCORV cooperators submitted for testing more than 1,500 rabies suspect "sick-acting" or dead animals. To combat the spread of rabies across Cape Cod, WS and CCORV cooperators distributed over 300,000 ORV baits. Currently, the partners continue to implement ORV baiting in cooperation with USDA National Rabies Management program for Cape distal locations for rabies control. The eventual goal is a rabies-free zone to include all of the Cape.

Wildlife Disease Management—To enhance preparedness for emergency disease response, WS continues to collaborate with USDA-Veterinary Services (VS) and several state and local health agencies. Subsequently, several interagency meetings and table-top exercises have been conducted, which significantly improved communications and strategies for responding to potential disease or other emergency response needs.

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), or bird flu, is a viral disease, which can infect domestic poultry and some wild birds. Each year, there is a bird flu season just as there is for humans and, as with people, some forms of flu are worse than others. The highly pathogenic H5N1 strain of bird flu has been found in increasing numbers of countries in Europe, Asia and Africa. Currently, HPAI H5N1 is not present in the United States. The U.S. Government is taking steps to prepare for and minimize the potential impact of this disease.

WS continues to lead a national multi-interagency collaboration to monitor wild migratory birds in the United States for HPAI H5N1. WS Massachusetts personnel are working in collaboration with State agencies and other public and private organizations to conduct surveillance activities for avian influenza by collecting samples from wild migratory birds. March 2009 will bring to a close the program's third surveillance year.

Protecting Federally Endangered Piping Plovers—During FY 2008 WS continued to assist the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MDFW) in managing fox and skunk predation on federally protected piping plovers and other shorebirds that nest on Plymouth, Massachusetts, beaches. For the several years, WS and MDFW, working together with a private wildlife foundation under a cooperative agreement, have been able reduce predation of shorebirds and enhance nesting success of these protected species.

Protecting Multiple Resources from Canada Goose Damage—For the past 30 years, resident Canada goose populations have increased in Massachusetts and continue to present a major wildlife challenge. Many traditional management methods are showing limited effectiveness as goose populations continue to grow. Massachusetts WS recommends the use of integrated wildlife damage management in which several effective methods are combined to alleviate geese conflicts. Methods include combining habitat management, exclusion, harassment, and repellants. WS program specialists conduct integrated programs with towns and homeowner associations to reduce the reproduction success of local geese. In FY 2008, the WS Massachusetts program conducted 116 consultations and resource loss evaluations and provided assistance with

applications to the USFWS for depredation permits. The consultations involved approximately \$180,650 in damage resources caused by Canada geese.

Looking to the Future

WS continues to provide citizens of Massachusetts with safe, effective, and humane assistance for a variety of wildlife conflicts through cooperatively funded wildlife damage management activities. A major concern will be preventing the spread of wildlife-borne diseases such as rabies, tularemia, salmonella, giardia, and E. coli. WS will meet new wildlife damage management challenges to assist a dynamic Massachusetts agricultural industry and continue to improve strategies for reducing wildlife hazards at airports.

Massachusetts Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS 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 play a role in wildlife damage management.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Alleviating wildlife hazards at airports to protect civilian and military passengers and aircraft
- Protecting human and animal health from disease threats such as rabies using oral rabies vaccination (ORV)
- Reducing threats to human health and safety and property damage from Canada geese, gulls, and other wildlife
- More recently, the WS program has increase efforts in protecting natural resources—in particular protected wildlife species, from various types of predation from other wildlife,
- Monitoring zoonotic diseases such as HPAI virus, tularemia, and chronic wasting disease.

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Massachusetts:

- Developing and enhancing management methods to protect avian threatened and endangered species
- Managing and evaluating grass types and height at airports for optimum aircraft safety while preserving conditions to also benefit protected grassland birds
- Stomach content analysis of raccoons as potential indicators of food preference and seasonal effects
- Successful use of ORV bait stations in human densely populated areas
- Accuracy and trajectory effectiveness of hand distributed ORV baits