

# Wildlife Services

Protecting People  
Protecting Agriculture  
Protecting Wildlife

## State Report

FY 2008

# Ohio



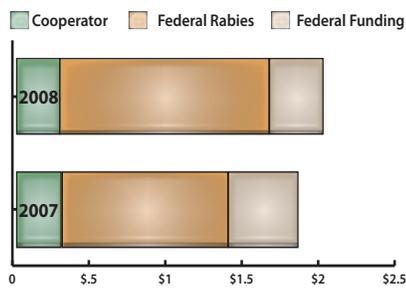
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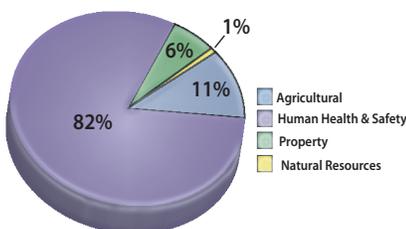
### Major Cooperators

- Ohio Cattleman's, Pork Producers, Sheep Improvement, & Poultry Breeder Assoc.
- Ohio County Commissioners Association
- Ohio Farm Bureau Federation
- Ohio Livestock Coalition
- Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center
- Ohio State University Extension
- Ohio Departments of Agriculture, Natural Resources, Health, and Transportation
- Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study
- 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, 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.

Ohio is a diverse mix of urban and suburban settings, agricultural lands, and forested environments with more than 11 million residents. Croplands, pastures, and forested areas make up more than 80 percent of Ohio's landscape. WS biologists help Ohio's livestock and agricultural producers reduce losses from predators and birds, and protect humans, domestic pets, and livestock from rabies. In addition, WS protects air passengers and aircraft from dangerous wildlife collisions with aircraft at 37 Ohio airports and military installations. In FY 2008, WS biologists assisted customers who reported \$935,716 in wildlife damages.

### 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 safely resolved 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 the program benefits from the latest science and technology. While WS conducts a wide range of operational and research activities, a few in-depth examples highlight WS' role.

**Protecting Health and Safety**—The raccoon variant of rabies entered Ohio in 1996 in the northeast counties adjacent to Pennsylvania. By the end of 1997, Ohio reported 62 cases, which threatened public health and safety. In an effort to halt the westward spread of this rabies across Ohio and into the Midwest, WS cooperated with other Federal and State agencies to create an immune barrier of vaccinated raccoons from Lake Erie to the Ohio River. As part of the program, oral vaccination baits are dropped in the target area.

In July 2004 a rabies-positive raccoon was found 6.6 miles beyond the bait zone. WS immediately began a large scale trap-vaccinate-release program (TVR) to aid the effort in creating an immune barrier. Oral vaccine was also dropped by air. Enhanced surveillance was conducted to determine the extent of the outbreak. During 2004-2008, 76 animals tested positive for the raccoon variant of rabies. Many cases centered around a particular area in Ohio initiating an intense 2008 TVR effort during which WS vaccinated over 4,000 raccoons.

The contingency effort in Ohio is focused on creating a rabies-immune raccoon population in target counties to prevent the westward spread of raccoon variant rabies. Enhanced surveillance and vaccination should greatly decrease the chance of exposure to human and domestic animals, as well as prevent the westward spread. The outbreak is of great concern in Ohio, not only because of the high raccoon densities in the Northeast, but because this outbreak has occurred on the western side of an existing oral rabies vaccination (ORV) barrier, which has been maintained and considered successful in nearly eliminating raccoon variant of rabies from the state. WS efforts to stem the spread of the raccoon-rabies will continue in this area, as well as the historically baited portion of the State in 2009.

**Protecting Air Travel**—Wildlife strikes with aircraft cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$625 million annually and pose a hazard to flight crews and passengers. Birds cause the majority of strikes. From 1990 to 2008, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reported more than 3,334 wildlife strikes resulting in \$16,343,481 in damages to aircraft at Ohio



United States Department of Agriculture  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

airports. The FAA estimates only about 20 percent of all strikes are reported.

WS is recognized internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) continually conducts research to understand the nature of wildlife hazards at airports and develop management tools to reduce hazards.

Applying this scientific expertise, WS provided technical assistance to 37 civil and military Ohio airports in FY 2008. In Ohio, WS 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 2008 WS trained 83 airport personnel to identify wildlife hazards on airfields and manage those hazards through the use of habitat management, effective wildlife dispersal techniques, and diligent record keeping to reduce the risk of wildlife collisions with aircraft. Two full-time wildlife biologists are stationed at two airports in Ohio to monitor and reduce wildlife hazards through habitat management, behavior modification, and other methods.

**Protecting Livestock from Predators**—Livestock are a very important industry in Ohio. The National Agricultural Statistics Services (NASS) reported that Ohio was the largest sheep producing State east of the Mississippi River and ranked eleventh in the United States in sheep and lamb production. The NASS estimated the value of 2004 Ohio lambs losses due to predators at \$164,000 (NASS 2005) and 2005 cattle losses at \$1,019,000 in 2005 (NASS 2006). Loss figures do not include the cost of damage prevention activities.

WS biologists in Ohio help to 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 identify and minimize livestock losses on their own.

NWRC conducts extensive research and develops methodology 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 have increased for WS to help minimize gull damage. Calls for WS assistance in mitigating urban and rooftop gull nesting colonies continues to increase annually. 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 species.

### Ohio 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. Seventy-five percent of WS funds in Ohio have been Congressionally directed to rabies protection.

#### 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 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Ohio:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing predators to protect livestock and wildlife
- Controlling wildlife vectors of rabies, pseudorabies and brucellosis
- Reducing blackbird/starling damage to crops and feedlots
- Methods for enhancing surveillance of emerging wildlife diseases

#### NWRC Field Station in Ohio

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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 (NASA). The restricted facility contains native grassland, reverted farmland, marsh, and woodland adjacent to intensively farmed land outside the fence. 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.