

# Wildlife Services

Protecting People  
Protecting Agriculture  
Protecting Wildlife

## State Report

FY 2008

# Pennsylvania



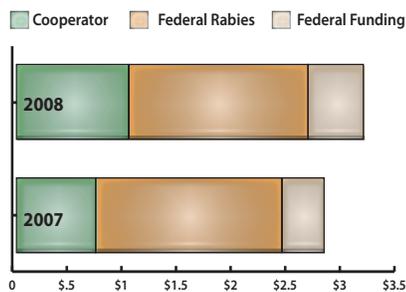
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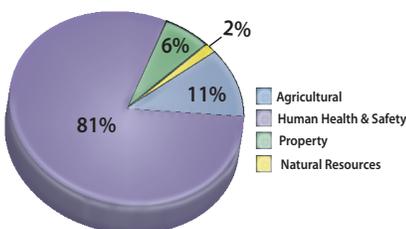
### Major Cooperators

- Federal Aviation Administration
- Bucks County Department of Parks and Recreation
- Pennsylvania Air National Guard Bureau
- Penn State University
- Pennsylvania Game Commission
- Cities of Philadelphia and of Allentown
- Pennsylvania Departments of Agriculture and of Health
- National Park Service
- Pennsylvania Century Commercial Lamb Producers and Feeders

### Total Funding (Millions)



### Resources Protected % of Total Funds



### USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Pennsylvania

The Wildlife Services (WS) program in Pennsylvania helps residents, industries, organizations and governments resolve conflicts with wildlife that affect agriculture, human health and safety, other natural resources, public infrastructure, and private property. Our professional wildlife biologists and specialists are located throughout Pennsylvania and are trained to manage wildlife conflicts with effective, selective, and humane strategies that value the integrity of the wildlife resource and the resources protected.

In many cases, people are able to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own with technical assistance from WS biologists. WS can provide this assistance over the telephone and can follow up with printed materials on the subject or site visits to evaluate the specific conflict. WS also provides on-site expertise, or direct assistance, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. In these cases, biologists choose the most appropriate methods and tools for resolving the conflict and apply a myriad of techniques in an integrated approach.

### Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS conducts scientific research across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by human-wildlife conflicts. WS biologists incorporate the newest knowledge on wildlife ecology and management when applying effective management strategies to resolve conflicts. In many cases, an adaptive management approach is used during ongoing projects to monitor the effectiveness of specific management actions and continually improve the efficiency of the program.

**Aquaculture Assistance**—Estimated costs associated with bird damage and damage prevention for the aquaculture industry nationally exceed \$17 million annually. WS conducts research to determine the problem's magnitude and to develop methods to reduce damage by fish-eating birds to aquaculture facilities. The research provides additional strategies for managing great blue herons and other fish-eating birds at aquaculture facilities in Pennsylvania.

**Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports**—Since 1995, aircraft/wildlife strikes have contributed to the loss of more than 115 human lives. Public safety threats from wildlife strikes are increasing, with the cost to U.S. civil aviation estimated at more than \$625 million annually. Pennsylvania's airports, which serve millions of passengers, are situated in the Atlantic Flyway, the north-south migration corridor for birds. Airports, travelers, and many agencies are keenly interested in managing wildlife strikes. NWRC conducts research to understand wildlife hazards at airports, develop effective hazard management tools, and monitor the effectiveness of control programs. In Pennsylvania, WS provides expert management recommendations to airports to reduce or eliminate wildlife hazards. They also assist with wildlife permitting processes, provide hazard management training, and conduct direct assistance.

WS' wildlife biologists at the Philadelphia International Airport work closely with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the City of Philadelphia to monitor and reduce hazards through habitat management, behavior modification, and other methods. Currently, WS staff cooperates with nearly 30 additional airports to assess wildlife hazards, develop site-specific management, and provide operational support to implement plans.

**Reducing the Occurrence of Rabies**—Rabies pose a serious threat to livestock, wildlife, pets, and public health. Raccoon rabies, first detected in Pennsylvania in 1982, has spread throughout the State and into adjacent States. Currently, nearly all terrestrial rabies cases in Pennsylvania are of the raccoon-rabies variant. Although human deaths are rare, the estimated public health costs associated with the disease detection, prevention, and control have risen, nationally exceeding \$300 million annually.



United States Department of Agriculture  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

In 2001, WS cooperated with Federal, State, and local agencies to create a vaccination immune barrier along Lake Erie and Ohio, connecting with the earlier-established Ohio oral rabies vaccination barrier. The current barrier now encompasses the entire area approximately 50 miles east of the Ohio border. Oral rabies vaccine (ORV) baits distributed throughout the targeted area vaccinate raccoons against rabies, thus preventing its spread. The continued ORV distribution will not only reduce the incidence of rabies, but ultimately could eliminate raccoon rabies in Pennsylvania and the entire eastern United States.

**Protecting Property**—WS receives more requests related to Canada geese damage than to any other animal. Approximately 300,000 resident Canada geese reside in Pennsylvania, one of the highest populations in the Atlantic Flyway. Concerns include the accumulation of feces, contaminated water, and aggressive geese that attack children and the elderly. The majority of geese benefit from nutritious lawns, ample water, and few predators in urban areas. Each year, WS assist hundreds of residents with goose-related problems by providing technical advice, group presentations, and assistance with permit processes.

In addition, WS provides direct assistance for goose damage. WS removes approximately 2,000 resident Canada geese from airports, parks, businesses, retirement communities, medical centers, and residential areas each year. The captured geese are donated to feed economically disadvantaged people. Problems caused by expanding goose populations have led researchers and others to consider population management as a means to minimize conflicts. WS strives to create community programs and innovative solutions that balance the needs of people and geese.

**Protecting Multiple Resources**— A State population of more than 1 million white-tailed deer presents a wildlife management challenge. Loss of wildlife habitat and deer's adaptability to the urban environment create an ever-increasing demand for resolution of human-deer conflicts. Deer and urban traffic result in hazardous situations for both deer and drivers. Deer host ticks that carry Lyme disease, which can infect humans. In addition to disease threats, vehicle collisions, and other property damage, deer also destroy habitat in city parks and natural areas. WS assisted in resolving issues in areas where sport hunting is no longer an effective or viable option, including airports, research facilities, neighborhoods, military installations, city and national parks, and public and private recreational areas.

**Protecting Livestock**— The Cooperative Livestock Protection Program (CLPP) provides Pennsylvania Agriculture Producers with technical and operational assistance concerning black vultures, European starlings, Canada geese, and eastern coyotes. The CLPP Program, which is funded by Federal, State, and local partners, is focused in Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Bedford, Butler, Blair, Cambria, Fayette, Franklin, Fulton, Greene, Huntington, Indiana, Somerset, Washington, and Westmoreland counties.

WS biologists in Pennsylvania 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.

Furthermore, the goal of the CLPP Program is to expand fully to provide assistance for all 58,000 Pennsylvania Agriculture Producers in order to protect dairy farmers from feed loss due to starlings, protect sheep and cattle farmers from coyotes and

black vultures, and protect property from geese damage. On an annual basis, dairy farmers lose about \$2,500 from feed loss due to starlings. More significantly, this program is vital because agriculture is Pennsylvania's number one industry.

### **Looking to the Future**

Agriculture is the State's largest employer and makes the greatest economic impact of any industry. However, low profit margins make staying in business difficult for many family farms. WS will examine more ways to help Pennsylvania agriculture by finding cost-effective and practical ways to reduce conflicts with increasing wildlife populations.

WS will strive to work with other Federal, State, and local government agencies to provide assistance and resolve human wildlife conflicts that affect government operations. As the Federal authority on wildlife conflicts, WS will reach out to land management and service agencies in a coordinated response to help improve the efficiency of government in this area.

### **Pennsylvania 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. Fifty-one percent of WS funds in Pennsylvania have been Congressionally directed to rabies protection.

### **NWRC Field Station in Pennsylvania**

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Web site: [www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage)

This unique multidisciplinary research center, affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania, provides access to specialized research opportunities focused on the development of species-selective non-lethal repellents and attractants. Chemical senses research (olfaction, taste, trigeminal chemoreception) is emphasized. The station's research has led to discovery and development of a bird repellent, both solid and liquid attractants for deer, visual repellents for deer and a variety of biologically based repellents and attractants for rodents.

### **Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:**

- Protecting civil and military aviation from wildlife strikes
- Protecting public health, livestock, and wildlife for raccoon strain rabies
- Protecting habitat, property, and human health and safety from over abundant deer populations
- Managing damage caused by Canada geese, vultures, coyotes, gulls, swallows, and European starlings
- Managing fish-eating bird damage to the aquaculture industry

### **Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Pennsylvania:**

- Improving assessment, sampling, and economic methods for wildlife damage management
- Increasing knowledge of wildlife vectors of rabies, chronic wasting disease, classical swine fever, and pseudorabies
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing bird predation to the aquaculture industry
- Evaluating wildlife disease issues impacting human or livestock health