

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2008

Utah



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Major Cooperators

- U.S. Department of Defense
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Utah Department of Agriculture and Food
- Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Utah

Each day, residents, industries, organizations and cooperating agencies call on the Utah Wildlife Services (WS) program for help in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, natural resources, and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. WS' professional wildlife biologists respond with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

WS works to protect property and reduce human health and safety risks at airports, schools and along roadways. The program also protects people, pets and property within the urban Wasatch Front from wildlife-borne diseases and damage caused by raccoons and skunks; protects vulnerable natural resources, such as mule deer or endangered species, from wildlife depredation; and educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. Specific projects conducted by Utah WS include protecting endangered black-footed ferrets and prairie dogs from predation, conducting an urban wildlife damage program to reduce conflicts in Salt Lake County, sampling and monitoring for sylvatic plague and raccoon roundworm, and reducing the risks to civilian and military aircraft caused by wildlife at airports.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

Utah WS is uniquely positioned within the State to assist livestock producers, industries and our cooperating agency partners with wildlife damage issues. Professional wildlife biologists and trained technicians provide direct assistance when wildlife damage requires special skills or when significant biological questions regarding the damage arise. Direct assistance involves assessment of the problem, application of safe and humane control technology and monitoring to assure the problem has been adequately addressed.

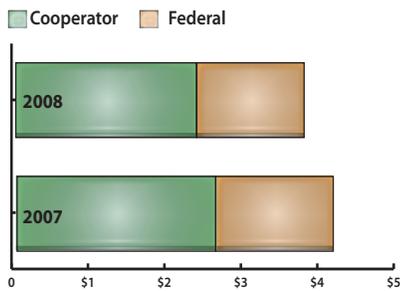
WS also offers information, advice, equipment and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this technical assistance can be provided over the phone. To support these efforts, WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), conducts scientific research across the Nation to develop answers to new problems and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Agricultural Crops—Utah WS assists crop producers managing damage caused by migratory birds through demonstrations of effective methods, the loan of equipment and supplies to prevent losses and the application of new methods where and when practical. Utah WS has pioneered the use of supplemental feeding to avoid corn damage caused by sandhill cranes in the spring, averting thousands of dollars in damage for farmers.

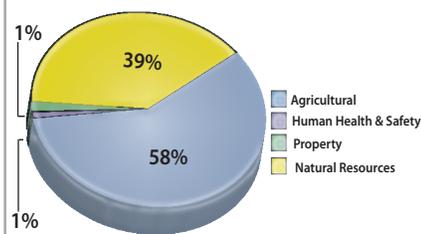
Protecting Livestock—Utah WS conducts predation management for livestock protection statewide. Coyotes, cougars, and black bears are the major predators of domestic sheep and cattle. The successful restoration of gray wolves in the Northern Rockies has led to livestock conflicts in Utah from wolves as well. Because of the sensitivity of predator populations to control methods, all livestock protection is conducted by wildlife damage professionals utilizing proven methods and is coordinated with partner agencies, including the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the appropriate offices of the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—Utah WS assists Salt Lake International Airport in managing the risks associated with wildlife strikes at the airport by training airport staff in the management of wildlife populations, directly conducting the removal of wildlife when a threat is imminent, and monitoring wildlife populations near the airport. Utah WS also conducts wildlife identification courses for other airports and assists airport and urban planners in preventing the creation of a wildlife attractant. Utah WS also assists Hill Air Force Base in managing its conflicts by coordinating migratory bird permits for nearby wildlife attractants.

Total Funding (Millions)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Urban Human Health and Safety Issues—Utah WS conducts an urban wildlife damage management program in Salt Lake County, where the wildland/urban interface almost always assures conflicts. Coyotes that attack people or pets are harassed or removed to preclude conflicts. Conflicts with raccoons and striped skunks, which serve as reservoirs for numerous diseases, are managed through a technical assistance program involving the loan of traps and an animal removal program. Increasing populations of urban waterfowl pose a significant disease risk at apartment complexes and Utah WS works to reduce the attractiveness of these areas to waterfowl as well as removing and relocating wild waterfowl.

Protecting Endangered Black-footed Ferrets—Utah WS conducts coyote removal to protect translocated black-footed ferrets from direct predation. Once considered the most endangered species in the country, the ferrets are from captive breeding sources and are naive to the risks of predation. Translocation of ferrets without conducting coyote control has been unsuccessful in other states. The coyotes removed also provide samples for disease monitoring, which allow biologists to monitor and predict risks to the ferrets and their prey.

Protecting Fawns from Predation by Coyotes—In areas where the populations are severely depressed and unlikely to recover without assistance, Utah WS protects mule deer and pronghorn fawns by conducting coyote removal. The balance between predator and prey is carefully managed to assure an ecosystem capable of supporting healthy populations of both. Only through the judicious use of predation management can wildlife management objectives be met in some areas.

Protecting Pets and Other Companion Animals from Predation—The urban wildlife program responds to numerous incidents of predator risks to pets and other animals. In most cases, education of the owner is sufficient to prevent additional risks associated with this type of damage. In addition to one-on-one education efforts, Utah WS hosts informational booths at public events to provide the information to members of the public interested in wildlife in their environment.

Protecting Public Buildings from Wildlife Damage—The Utah WS program regularly responds to wildlife issues in public buildings, including damage caused by bats, structural damage caused by raccoons, or damage caused by droppings from roosting birds. In addition to the property damage caused by these animals, the health risks to occupants are often significant.

Looking to the Future

In Utah, public safety is a concern for wildlife managers. This is particularly true at airports. Additional attention needs to be provided at non-certificated airports in rural Utah, where the numbers of flights may be small but the rural nature of the airport lends itself to wildlife conflicts. Human safety conflicts will likely increase with major predators, such as cougars, black bears and wolves. Utah WS must be prepared to respond to these conflicts on a minute's notice.

The successful management of large predator populations has led to an explosion in their populations. Utah WS plays a critical role in public acceptance of predators in our midst, by managing predation on livestock and vulnerable wildlife. Predator conservation must include an effective and responsive damage management component; in Utah the WS program fills that critical need.

Utah Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators who have a vested interest in the program: livestock producers, private individuals, businesses, and other Federal, State, and local government agencies. Major funding is provided through the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF), which under State law must provide a wildlife damage program. Because of the effectiveness of this Federal program, the UDAF chooses to cooperate with WS in a single, responsive effort.

NWRC Research Station in Utah

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One of the premiere predator research facilities, the field station includes offices on the Utah State University campus and an outdoor predator research facility in a research complex. Studies focus on the ecology of coyote depredation, reproductive intervention strategies for coyotes, and sensory and behavioral methods for managing coyote depredation on livestock.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting livestock from predation by coyotes, black bears, cougars and, recently, wolves
- Protecting civil and military aviation from wildlife strikes
- Protecting human safety and property from wildlife damage in the urban/wildland interface
- Protecting native wildlife from excessive predation
- Protecting endangered species during recovery efforts

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Utah:

- Improving methods to manage livestock predation
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Predator-prey ecology
- Evaluating waterfowl as disease, and parasite reservoirs
- Managing rabies and raccoon roundworm transmission