

USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services (WS) Talking Points

Purpose of Program

- The Wildlife Services (WS) program provides federal leadership and expertise to resolve wildlife conflicts and create a crucial balance for people and wildlife on the same land. WS is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.
- Wildlife management generally involves a partnership of federal, state and local government as well as institutions and landowners. WS considers the well-being of the public and wildlife at all times. When formulating control strategies, WS specialists consider protected or endangered animals, environmental impacts, the cost effectiveness of control methods and social and legal concerns. WS professionals provide biologically sound, effective and accountable solutions to wildlife problems. WS professionals strive to educate the public and producers about the importance of using responsible strategies for living with wildlife.
- WS has more than 2,500 cooperative agreements in place across the United States. USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) documented an \$18.3 million loss of sheep and lambs to predators in 2004. Add cattle and calf losses to that figure and it jumps to \$111 million. Absent predator management, losses would explode, driving family farms and ranches out of business.

The Role of WS

- WS provides assistance in resolving wildlife damage on private land in addition to federal- and state-managed land. WS programs and activities conform to all federal, state and local laws and regulations and are designed and conducted to safeguard the environment, non-target wildlife populations and public safety.

Techniques Used by WS

- A wide range of methods are used by WS personnel in predator damage management including both non-lethal and lethal techniques. Generally, nonlethal methods are the methods of first resort and already in use by producers before WS assistance is requested; however, these methods alone are not sufficient, and the producers rely on WS to conduct more intense removal of local and individual animals to help curtail predation to acceptable levels.
- A concept of replacing the current WS program with one that is entirely non-lethal with indemnification payments for predator caused losses has been explored and found to be economically unfeasible.