

At Risk: Agriculture, Natural Resources, Property, and Human Health

- ◆ Texas is a diverse mix of urban, suburban, agricultural, forest, and desert environments – home to more than 26 million people and a wide range of wildlife species.
- ◆ Wildlife are important to the aesthetics and health of the state’s environment and economy. Yet wildlife also cause millions of dollars in damage to Texas agriculture, natural resources, and property; and their activities can pose a threat to public health and safety.

AgriLife Extension’s Response

Texas Wildlife Services (WS) is a cooperative program between the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, and private and public partners.

- ◆ Its mission is to use research-based methods and education to protect Texas agriculture and other industries, natural resources, property, and public health and safety from damage caused by wildlife.
- ◆ The program is the largest wildlife damage management program in the United States, providing service on more than 4,700 properties covering nearly 17.5 million acres.
- ◆ In addition to technical and direct assistance, WS educates property owners and residents about wildlife damage management in both rural and urban areas.



- ◆ WS works with the Texas cattle industry to help protect beef cows and calves from predation losses to coyotes, bobcats, feral hogs, and eagles.
- ◆ WS responds to emerging issues, such as two canine rabies epidemics — a threat to public health — that affected dogs and gray foxes.
- ◆ Wildlife damage at airports has led WS to provide management assistance at commercial and Department of Defense (DoD) airports. Through a current agreement, WS has an airfield operations biologist located at five DoD airports.
- ◆ Extensive measures are used to control flood and other types of damage caused by beaver activities.

Economic Impact

Economic impacts are measured by the reduction in property damage caused by feral hogs and other wildlife; the value of livestock and wildlife saved from predation; and the value of property protected from beaver damage in 2013.

- ◆ WS directly assisted landowners in removing over 20,000 feral hogs from more than 5.9 million acres — saving landowners an estimated \$4.1 million in avoided property losses.
- ◆ Predation management efforts saved an estimated \$45.2 million in livestock and wildlife.
- ◆ Beaver damage management efforts protected flood control structures, roads, bridges, timber, crops, and pastures valued at \$16.3 million.

Wildlife Services programs also lead to broader benefits for the public, including protecting natural resources, and human health and safety.

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