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ANIMAL DAMAGE MANAGEMENT: RESPONSIBILITIES OF VARIOUS AGENCIES AND THE NEEDS FOR COORDINATION AND SUPPORT

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It is a pleasure and privilege to again have a part in the Eastern Wildlife Damage Control Conference and to return to Ithaca and Cornell. The opportunity is much appreciated. I commend the sponsors of the conference and their selection of the theme, "Human and Wildlife Interactions: Public Perceptions and Management Realities"-an increasingly important and compelling topic.

It will be my purpose to discuss the responsibilities of various agencies and stress the obvious imperative of coordination, cooperation, and support. In keeping with the conference theme, I would like to develop the concept that the cooperating agencies should assume a greater responsibility for identifying, justifying, and supporting animal control. In other words, those who request and share in the benefits of needed control should carry its banner and share in its criticism. Wildlife damage management is one area where public perceptions and management realities are light-years apart.

Let me point out that the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA), founded in 1902, includes all 50 state fish and wildlife agencies and 6 U.S. Federal agencies, including the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). Among IAFWA's objectives is the support of sound, rational, and professional resource management. The Association has an Animal Damage Control Committee and has been supportive of necessary and responsible control. Most states are involved in and conduct various animal damage control measures. Most are cooperators with APHIS. So the Association has a very strong interest in wildlife damage management, its successful pursuit, and how it is perceived by the public.

Before going on, I would like to describe my own personal philosophy as an advocate of balanced resource management and use, including fishing, hunting, and damage control, as well as nonconsumptive uses, including protection when necessary.

Now, about responsibilities. It is easy and superficial to say that animal damage control responsibilities were transferred from the Fish and Wildlife Service in the Department of Interior to APHIS in Agriculture in 1986. That really is only the beginning. However, that is the way the subject is usually dismissed, consciously and subconsciously by professionals, as well as the lay public. As this audience certainly knows, that is only a part of the story. Indeed, the federal responsibility is vested with APHIS. Additionally, the states have control elements, usually within the fish and wildlife agency. However, the public perception of responsibility is unclear and needs correction.

Although my topic is about agency responsibilities, let pause to look more broadly at some other areas where responsibilities are exercised.

It begins with the legislative process at both state and federal levels. Several state legislatures have acted to restrict, or regulate the use of traps and/or toxicants. Similarly actions have been taken at the federal level.

The Congress and most state legislatures have established and assigned responsibilities to several agencies that directly affect control activities. Examples include environmental protection, animal welfare, and endangered species.

Legislative mandates have directly affected control methods and costs. For example, amendments to the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) have resulted in the Environmental Protection Agency requiring a costly reregistration of virtually all chemicals used in control work. Some state legislatures have taken other regulatory actions.

Additionally, legislation has resulted in confused agency responsibilities. In a number of states, the responsibilities for some animals are vested with the state agriculture agencies, and for other species, with the fish and wildlife agency. At the federal level, authority for migratory birds is vested with the Department of Interior, while responsibility for control of depredations is vested in the Department of Agriculture.

On occasion the executive branch injects itself at the highest levels. An Executive Order of 1972 prohibited most chemicals used in predator control. Counties and cities have also adopted measures that affect control.

This brief listing is cited simply to illustrate the complexity or maze of actions that those involved with animal damage management must be aware of even before attempting to coordinate with, and enlist the support of, cooperating agencies.

For purposes of this discussion, the cooperating agencies may be considered in two categories: those that regulate methods, and those that need some form of control to carry out their mission. Examples of the latter include airport authorities urban and suburban instrumentalities, and agencies managing fish, wildlife, and land.

I would like to concentrate on the latter, the agencies that require wildlife control in pursuit of their objectives. As ex

examples (1) Airport authorities are responsible for aircraft safety. If they determine that bird strikes present a problem, they turn to the state or federal control agency. (2) Public health officials are responsible for public health. If they determine that plague, rabies, or histoplasmosis are a threat and that wild animal numbers need to be reduced, they turn to the control agency. (3) Fish and wildlife agencies are responsible for the well being of fish and wildlife resources, including endangered species. If they determine that predation is a problem, perhaps in the restoration of an endangered species; if waterfowl are causing unacceptable crop damage; or, if cormorants are taking Atlantic salmon smolts, they call on the appropriate control agency. (4) Land managing agencies are responsible for administering legislatively-mandated multiple uses, including grazing. Included are practices essential to grazing management (i.e., fencing, water development, rotation of flocks, road development, and maintenance). If predation is a problem in the successful management of grazing, they turn to the control agency.

This may all seem an elaboration of the obvious. It is not. The state or federal control elements or agencies operate no airports, have no public health problems, no salmon smolts, and have no land nor livestock to manage. What they do have is the capability and expertise to recommend or apply control measures to assist other agencies in achieving their objectives. They can suggest the combination of measures needed to implement a responsible integrated management system, including the application of lethal means, if appropriate. There is a vast difference.

Wildlife damage management personnel, state and federal, have a service to render in a responsible manner. The requesting agency, however, should identify the need and develop the documentation and justification. A moral obligation to publicly support the program would then be evoked.

Too often, however, this has not been the case. For example, APHIS (and the Fish and Wildlife Service before it), found themselves in the position of justifying the funding, documenting the need, defending and accepting the criticism; even asking approval of the requesting agency. The requesting agencies have found this to be a splendid arrangement. They did not need to do the control or take the criticism, and often joined in the criticism.

Obviously, there are many situations when some form of advice or control is requested by private individuals or interests. Here, the control agency must satisfy itself of the need **and justification, and** base its decision on reliable data, usually available from public agencies. Generally, however, the control relates to agency responsibilities.

I do not mean to imply that those responsible for providing wildlife damage management services should not be in a solid position to support and defend these activities. To the contrary, they should satisfy themselves that a solid and defensible case

has been made, and develop a solid database covering their activities.

I am suggesting, however, that it is long past time to expand cooperation and coordination to include a partnership with full mutual support. The agencies and organizations requesting control should be involved directly and formally in the planning process on a project and annual basis. They should provide adequate documentation and justification of the need, and they should also approve of the methods to be employed. Further, the requesting agency should help resolve the differences of opinion concerning the operation that may exist among various interests. Finally, they should clearly understand that the services will be provided only if there is budget and public support. More pointedly, I am suggesting that control personnel be a bit hard to get.

The public perception is that wildlife damage management personnel and their agencies are killers. With the help of the anti-control extremists, the public has come to perceive animal damage control personnel and agencies as autonomous rogues, seeking situations where they can practice their trade. This is wrong. The public must come to understand that the control agency is responsible for implementing needed control and is providing control as a public service, usually at the request of responsible agencies, for very sound reasons.

The public has no perception of the alternatives that are considered and applied in developing an integrated control program, including preventive measures, *transplanting*, *hunting*, and others. There are valid pros and cons for each alternative, with various interest groups often sharply divided. The requesting agency should help change this perception by involving these interests and resolving the differences.

The concept of integrated damage management is now widely accepted, as is the application of the necessary tools and methods to prevent or control damage. I suggest that the concept be expanded beyond the methodology to include cooperation, coordination, and public support from all involved in control (the constituent agencies and beneficiaries, as well as the practitioners). What is needed is fully-integrated cooperation and public support, and the initiative of the requesting agency to resolve public differences. This would really represent the cooperating agencies' appropriate and responsible response.

Although control is a shared responsibility in most cases, the initiative for bringing this shift in direction must come from the wildlife damage management personnel and agencies. It must be a conscious policy supported by individual follow-up. Clearly, there will be some immediate positive response, and there will be some reluctance and resistance. It will take persistence, determination, and grit. However, if wildlife

damage management is to be pursued successfully, it must have public understanding and acceptance. The public will not change and be supportive until there is broad and overt support from the cooperating agencies.

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Clearly cooperation and coordination are absolutely essential to a successful program. However, it cannot be passive or reluctantly granted. Control programs must be partnerships and include public support. This would result in a fully integrated wildlife damage management approach. It would also bring public perceptions closer to the management realities.