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## INVOLVING HUNTING AND TRAPPING IN COOPERATIVE WILDLIFE DAMAGE CONTROL

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INVOLVING HUNTING AND TRAPPING IN COOPERATIVE WILDLIFE DAMAGE CONTROL  
--Third Eastern Wildlife Damage Control Conference--  
by Ed Hackett 1/

The perception of a wildlife damage problem may vary greatly among groups with a stake in the problem. To the deer hunter, there is no such problem as too many deer. To the farmer, in the midst of a personal economic disaster, one deer may seem too many. To the conservation officer (CO) who has spent a career building deer populations, the farmer's problem may be a sign of success. To the USDA-APHIS-ADC staff member, solving the farmer's problem may be the most important issue. The key to resolving these conflicting views of the same event is to make each of the parties aware of their interdependence. Therefore, one of the most important roles of any state wildlife agency involved with wildlife damage control is to enhance communication and facilitate the negotiations among the groups.

When the depredating species can be legally harvested, communication efforts should be made to ensure that wildlife damage control is not separated from hunting and trapping. In Mississippi, there are three programs where attempts are being made to integrate wildlife damage control, hunting, and trapping: (1) deer-crop depredation, (2) coyote and beaver damage, and (3) cormorant-catfish depredation.

The Cooperative Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) has been used successfully to bring landowners, farmers, deer clubs, and CO's to the table to examine each other's viewpoint. In areas suffering crop damage, DMAP deer clubs have bought scare guns and volunteered personal time to help farmers protect crops.

Club participation has minimized the effort required by local CO's in issuing and administering Mississippi Department of Wildlife Conservation

(DWC) crop depredation permits to farmers. The clubs have also made efforts to control deer numbers by properly harvesting antlerless deer during the deer season.

To assist landowners with fur-bearer damage control, the USDA-APHIS-ADC, the Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service (MCES), and the DWC provide landowners a list of trappers who have expressed a willingness to trap nuisance animals. Coyote and beaver control have been the primary services provided by the trappers. The trapper list is provided by county and the cooperating agencies do not endorse any specific person. Although the system offers the landowner a solution, he is responsible for solving the problem and negotiating arrangements with the trapper. The system also promotes trapping as an important and viable tool for solving wildlife damage problems.

The loss of catfish fingerlings to wintering cormorants is another wildlife damage control problem in Mississippi. Currently the problem is being managed by APHIS-ADC and MCES personnel. Although its efficacy has not been evaluated, the DWC would like to encourage catfish farmers to utilize duck hunting on problem ponds as a potential form of cormorant harassment during the waterfowl season.

Hunting, trapping, and the involvement of sportsmen are not the only means available to provide animal damage control to landowners. However, a failure to consider and strongly encourage the use of these tools is an error and will minimize their utilization value to wildlife management. An integrated program of animal damage control involving hunting and trapping helps to keep landowners, hunters, and even professional wildlifers from perceiving wildlife damage control as being a distinct form of wildlife management.

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