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Wildlife Services Assistance at Dairy Facilities

The Wildlife Services (WS) program, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), helps reduce wildlife damage to agricultural, urban, and natural resources. WS also addresses threats to public health and safety and protects natural resources from wildlife damage.

Using an integrated approach that combines a variety of science-based methods, WS assists dairy producers in resolving problems associated with bird contamination, wolf depredation, and bovine tuberculosis transmission, among other things.

European Starlings

European starlings often congregate in feedlots and dairies during winter months and cause damage by consuming livestock feed and by defecating on feed and water supplies—potentially transmitting harmful diseases to livestock. The birds also defecate on building structures and equipment, shortening their useful life span and increasing cleanup costs.

Upon request, WS can provide on-site assistance to any affected facility where starlings are causing damage and develop plans to reduce the damage caused by the birds. These plans may include recommendations for exclusion, harassment, or lethal methods. For example, trained WS specialists may assist producers through the use of an environmentally sound avian toxicant—DRC-1339—that reduces starling numbers without posing a threat to other nontarget species or livestock. Bird populations can also be managed by trapping.

Wolf Depredation

Wolves are making a strong comeback in many parts of the Midwestern United States. They can be found in Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. While the expanding wolf population is an ecological success story, it also creates challenges for farmers and ranchers who must protect livestock and domestic

animals from these predators.

Although most wolves tend to inhabit remote forested areas, their range sometimes brings them in close proximity to poultry and livestock farms, especially farms located in isolated areas. When this happens, livestock predation can occur. Wolves may also prey upon companion and hunting dogs.

WS, in cooperation with State wildlife agencies, can provide assistance to those who experience suspected predation of livestock by wolves. Such assistance may include direct assistance in the form of a trained WS specialist who can capture and remove individual wolves. Some States offer compensation programs and producers may be eligible for monetary compensation from the State for their losses. A State government agency would make that determination.

It is important to note that wolves are protected under Federal law. It is illegal to harm or kill a wolf, except in defense of human life or under authorization by an appropriate government agency. Any attempt to disperse a wolf away from a farm site must be done without physically harming the wolf. Contact WS to obtain more information about nonlethal methods for preventing wolf depredation.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Research by USDA's Agricultural Research Service's National Animal Disease Center has demonstrated that deer can transmit bovine tuberculosis (TB) to one another and to cattle through feed. WS personnel are dedicated to helping producers prevent the spread of TB from deer to cattle. In Michigan, WS assists producers by providing fencing to keep deer out of stored feed and by removing infected deer under disease management permits. WS is also carrying out research to determine other ways to prevent the transmission of TB between wildlife and cattle.

If you would like more information or if you would like assistance from WS to resolve these or any other wildlife damage issue, please call 1-866-4USDAWS.

You can find more information on WS programs by visiting our Web site at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ws>.

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