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DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTERNET CENTER FOR WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT (html.www.ianr.unl/wildlife)

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ABSTRACT: Information, materials, and services on wildlife damage management are available through educational institutions, agencies, and private industry, but access is highly variable, depending on the location and type of problem that exists. With the development of the worldwide web, electronic information on vertebrate pests has proliferated, but access by direct links or browsers has limitations. The authors have developed a website that will serve as an Internet Center for information on wildlife damage management. It provides links to web-based publications, reference materials, list servers, agency and organization websites, home-study and certification programs, and information and service providers. The Internet Center will significantly increase public awareness and understanding of wildlife damage problems. It will facilitate distribution of information to the public and improve communication among resource providers. Ultimately, the Center will increase implementation of integrated pest management (IPM) practices that will lead to increased economic and environmental benefits.

KEY WORDS: internet, communication, integrated pest management, vertebrate pests, website, wildlife damage management

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INTRODUCTION

Wildlife damage problems are experienced by all segments of society. Row crops, forages, rangeland, fruits, vegetables, ornamentals, and turf are all susceptible to wildlife damage at various stages of development. Agricultural producers lose billions of dollars each year due to crop damage caused by deer, voles, blackbirds, and other wildlife species (Conover et al. 1995). In addition, over 75,000 people are injured annually or become ill in North America due to wildlife-related incidents. For most of these problems, IPM principles can be applied to reduce damage to tolerable levels. Information, materials, and services on wildlife damage management are available through educational institutions, agencies, and private industry, but access is highly variable, depending on the location and type of problem that exists. The worldwide web provides an excellent opportunity to consolidate existing and future information on IPM and wildlife damage management. The authors have developed a Center on the worldwide web (html.www.ianr.unl/wildlife) to facilitate distribution of information and increase adoption of IPM practices. They anticipate that it will become a widely known, one-stop website that facilitates access to up-to-date, comprehensive, and useful information on wildlife damage management. The project is national, if not international, in scope.

The goal of this project is to increase adoption of IPM practices through the development and maintenance of a website on the internet that will centralize access to wildlife damage management information. The measurable objectives include: 1) increase public access (producers, consultants, homeowners) to all internet information on IPM practices associated with wildlife damage management; 2) increase public access to agencies, organizations, consultants, and materials vendors that provide information and assistance on wildlife damage management; and 3) increase communication among resource professionals associated with IPM and wildlife damage management on the internet. It is anticipated that the website will significantly increase producer and public awareness of wildlife damage problems and management techniques.

METHODS

The Internet Center is a website, maintained on a server at the University of Nebraska's Distributed Environments for Active Learning Laboratory. In the boundaryless environment of the worldwide web, investigators, technicians, and collaborators work together from their own home sites to maintain and update the website. Links will be established among the web page and all selected wildlife damage management information on the internet. Examples include extension, state and federal fact sheets, circulars, and guides. Links have been established to websites of USDA-IPM, USDA-Wildlife Services, National Wildlife Research Center, Berryman Institute for Wildlife Damage Management, The Wildlife Society, state wildlife agencies, and private industry consultants and materials vendors. The authors have also linked to the book, "Prevention and Control of Wildlife Damage," and the listserver WDAMAGE, which

functions as a communication bulletin board. New information will be scanned and incorporated into the web, including components of wildlife damage conference proceedings, refereed journal publications, and home-study courses. The website will be maintained in the future and new information will be added as it becomes available.

Impacts of the website will be evaluated by two methods. First, an on-line questionnaire will be maintained that will generate information about user knowledge regarding IPM, implementation of IPM practices, pesticide use, land area affected, and money saved. In addition, the number of user contacts associated with information sources, linked websites, and WDAMAGE will be determined annually.

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