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RESEARCH NEEDS IN WILDLIFE DAMAGE CONTROL
--Third Eastern Wildlife Damage Control Conference--
by James E. Miller 1/

The wildlife profession has achieved great success in habitat management, game population restoration, and in learning to manage wildlife populations for public use and enjoyment during the past 50 years. However, a number of wildlife species have become serious problems to agricultural profitability and to natural resources managers in recent years.

These problem situations may well focus on a lack of appropriate research or perhaps just not keeping pace. For the most part, wildlife research for the prevention and control of wildlife damage has been latently reactive, rather than proactive. Obviously, one of the difficulties continues to be, how to prioritize and direct these research needs. Others include, who is going to do the research and what kind of coordination there is between research agencies, institutions, managers and users.

What then are some of the concerns and criteria that wildlife damage prevention and control research must try to address? I submit the following for consideration:

1. It must be both proactive and reactive to--identify problems and project solutions.
2. It must be visionary in attempting to be ahead of the curve on future needs and those projected from anticipated changes. For example, are we exploring the research possibilities of biotechnology and IPM integration?
3. It must be willing to develop the necessary capabilities to accurately and efficiently assess damage, potential for

damage, and the tools needed for cost-effective prevention and control programs.

4. It must be innovative and risk-taking in pursuit of new techniques and methodologies as well as re-examining some of the pesticidal and non-pesticidal techniques that have been put on the shelf in the past.
5. It must increase the emphasis for maintaining existing, useful tools and technologies.
6. It must be supported and cooperatively conducted by State and Federal agencies and research institutions in a coordinated manner.
7. It must be responsive to identified needs from the local, State, and Federal levels and ensure that these needs are transmitted and understood by researchers and administrators.
8. It must be made available to those involved in technology transfer for translation into an understandable and usable product that can be communicated to, and implemented by, managers, and users.
9. It must be balanced with management strategies through continuous interaction between researchers and managers with appropriate targeting and prioritization.

In a 1985, three day meeting of about 25 professionals from the Fish and Wildlife Service--ADC research and management staffs, Extension wildlife specialists from several States and from USDA, at the Denver Wildlife Research Center (DWRC), the scope of wildlife damage prevention and control research needs were prioritized. Although 69 specific research needs were prioritized and ranked by the group, a synopsis of the concerns

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and statements that were reported from this meeting may be of equal value. They are as follows:

1. that additional funding to support an expanded research program stressing both lethal and non-lethal damage prevention and control methods, including population reductions of some species, is both desirable and necessary; not only to protect agricultural profitability, related problems, and human health concerns, but to reduce impacts on desirable wildlife and their habitats as well.
2. that increased emphasis on both basic and applied research is necessary to advance the recognition and utility of wildlife damage prevention and control acceptability and credibility.
3. that a holistic approach to problem wildlife management through development of techniques directed at the vulnerability of target species while reducing hazards to non-target species is desirable.
4. that both chemical development and manipulation of visual and auditory behavior depend upon experimental determination of behavioral vulnerability of the target wildlife species and population management flexibility by the manager.
5. that the areas of problem definition, sociology, ecology, genetics, cultural methods and management capabilities provide a major need for interface between researchers, wildlife biologists, agricultural and social scientists.
6. that cooperation and coordination in these problem areas might best be achieved through encouraging the exchange of information between the DWRC, University research scientists

with capabilities and experience in these areas, and the managers and users directly involved.

7. that a renewed Federal commitment must be made to support and direct research in this area. There also needs to be a renewed interest by wildlife researchers in State agencies and within University wildlife and natural resources departments to expand research efforts in this area.
8. that solutions to wildlife damage prevention and control are generally not available from the private sector due to a high cost/low profit market.
9. that continuing prohibitions on vertebrate pesticides, lack of interest and practicality for development and registration of new and efficacious pesticides pose serious concerns to the future availability of viable pesticides. Both researchers and managers need to re-examine some previously used, non-pesticidal techniques and methodologies, as well as continually search for new and innovative methods and techniques which utilize existing registered pesticides.

I will close with this reminder. If we expect private landowners who control over 2/3 of the wildlife habitat in this nation to continue to provide this habitat and access for recreational use, the wildlife profession must be willing to provide the necessary research, operational, technical assistance and educational programs that are responsive to the landowners and managers needs for wildlife damage prevention and control.