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COMMERCIAL WILDLIFE PEST CONTROL PERMITS
—An Alternative Approach—

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—An Alternative Approach—
by Gerard W. Wendt*

The Pennsylvania Game Commission has, throughout our existence, tried many new approaches to solve our wildlife/human conflicts. In recent years, the District Game Protector has been plagued with calls requesting help with nuisance wildlife, especially in the high population urban areas. While the law provides for methods of dealing with deer and bear which cause damage to crops and related materials, little is included to simplify the situation created by small mammal wildlife pests. With limited manpower available, which has been further complicated as a result of the Supreme Court ruling regarding the Fair Labor Standards Act and overtime pay, it became imperative that we find a better way to handle these problems. Meetings and discussions with several of our urban Officers helped us develop a Wildlife Pest Control permit concept which was presented to our Commission, approved and implemented in the fall of 1983.

What is a Commercial Wildlife Pest Control permit? It is a special permit issued under authority of the Game Law at an annual fee of $25.00. It is issued to interested individuals and exterminator firms and authorizes them to trap and remove wildlife for fees which they establish. The permit was designed to help the Officers in high population districts, but can apply in rural counties as well. Game Protectors were instructed that this system does not absolve the Officer of his/her responsibility in dealing with wildlife but offers an alternate approach and an avenue in which to channel complaints.

In selecting and approving applicants for these permits, we try to impress upon them the need to secure the homes or gardens from future infestation by similar wildlife. More money is to be made in the animal proofing operation, than the actual removal of wildlife. This can tie into the reason that the Officer refers calls to the commercial operator, in that the Game Protector or one of his Deputies can possibly trap and remove the problem animal but, with conditions as they are, another will probably take its place. Whereas, the professional who holds the permit is prepared to close up the entrances, etc., which will eliminate future problems. We encourage numerous permittees in an area which will provide the caller with several to choose from and eliminate any question of favoritism or collusion.

Conditions and Authorizations of Permit: With the issuance of each permit, an attachment is included which spells out the authority and limitations granted and are as follows:

A. The validity of your Commercial Wildlife Pest Control Permit is conditioned upon receipt of any other required Federal, state or local permits and strict observance of all applicable laws.

B. Authorizes permittee to remove or destroy wildlife by safe and humane means at any time of the year.

C. Permittee shall have approval of property owner and confine activity to said property.

D. All skunks, raccoons, groundhogs, bats and opossums shall be terminated in a humane manner within 24 hours. All other mammals and all birds shall be released in a suitable location within 24 hours.

E. Permit shall be carried at all times and presented upon demand of any Officer.

F. Each month a report of activities shall be submitted to the District Game Protector, listing the number of
each species taken. Report due by the
tenth day of the month following, on
forms supplied by the Commission.

G. The sale, trade, barter or
give away of any live or dead birds
or animals or parts thereof taken
under authority of this permit is
prohibited, except as otherwise pro-
voked in this permit.

H. All devices shall be tagged
or labeled with permit number,
permittee name and telephone number.

I. The use of pelts taken during
trapping season is authorized.

J. A separate permit shall be
required for each base of operations.

K. Any waterfowl or other
migratory birds taken under authority
of a Federal permit shall be turned
over to the local District Game
Protector for relocation unless
otherwise instructed by the Officer.

L. Specific advance approval
shall be secured from the District
Game Protector before any attempts are
made to take deer, bear, beaver, hawks
or owls.

M. Permittee shall at all times
hereafter indemnify and save harmless
the Commonwealth from and against any
and all detriment, losses, claims,
demands, suits, costs and expenses not
herein provided for which the
Commonwealth may suffer, sustain or be
subjected to, directly or indirectly,
by reason of the issuance of this
permit.

Results: With this program now
almost 2 years old, indications are
that it is working rather well. In the
high human population areas it appears
that the good businessman is capable of
earning a substantial income and
devoting his full time to wildlife
removal and related home repair and
animal proofing. In the less urban
areas, it is not such a lucrative
business and some are having a
difficult time becoming successful.

Problems: The only significant
problem which has arisen is one created
by a State Senator who insists that it
is the responsibility of the
Pennsylvania Game Commission to handle
all wildlife and feels that he and his
constituents should not be required to
pay to have their wildlife problems
solved. This originated from some
personal conflicts with squirrels on
his property which were not handled
quickly enough by our Officer to suit
the Senator and was compounded by
complaints from a few people in his
Senatorial district who were possibly
overcharged by a permittee who was
anxious to get rich. This problem has
currently been solved by our Director
and, hopefully, will not surface again.
Aside from this, and a few other
disgruntled people who don't want to
pay for a service they always received
free, the program is working well and
has created the hoped for alternative.