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The Probe NADCA
ISSUE 219
November/December 2001

Oversight of Wildlife Damage Control Operators

Editor's comments: Oversight and regulation of private, wildlife damage control operators has been a topic of some discussion for several years. Over the last couple of years this topic has been receiving increased attention. It now seem apparent that some sort of uniform oversight on a nationwide basis looms on the horizon.

This issue of **THE PROBE** *presents some views on this matter from two organizations. NADCA members, and anyone involved in wildlife control, are encouraged to read the draft oversight guidelines on the web pages mentioned in each article. As stated by the authors of these articles, these are draft proposals - not final documents. There is considerable need, and hopefully opportunity, for discussion. An old adage comes to mind, "speak or be spoken for."*

As editor, I would be interested in receiving reactions to these proposed guidelines, alternate proposals, questions, and even brief comments for publication in **THE PROBE.**

Larry Sullivan, Editor, **THE PROBE.**

Oversight of the Wildlife Control Industry

Tim Julien, President, NWCOA

The talk around town has been the need for states to regulate the private, wildlife damage control industry. The National Wildlife Control Operators Association (NWCOA) has been very busy talking with many different state wildlife agencies about regulations for damage control activities. I have been personally involved in many of these discussions and find for the most part the greatest need is to clarify the process, authority, and conditions surrounding wildlife damage control issues.

It now appears that if a private wildlife control operator (WCO) proposes to provide wildlife damage control services to property owners and managers, a flood of new regulations are required.

Many state regulations contain language that allows property owners to protect their property from wildlife damage with few restrictions. The need for wildlife damage control services continues to increase and the public is demanding solutions. It was once acceptable for the property owner to do whatever was needed to control wildlife damage to protect private property, health and safety.

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Oversight of the Wildlife Control Industry: Regulatory and Statutory Standards as Recommendations to the States

John Hadidian & Michele Childs, The Humane Society of the United States

The development of the wildlife control industry, in which private practitioners engage in wildlife conflict and nuisance abatement work for a fee, has led to a need for greater oversight by agencies vested with responsibility for wildlife. The extent of growth has been largely undocumented, but where data does exist, growth appears to be rapid. Curtis et al. (1995) reported a 309% growth in the number of private businesses in New York over a six year period, a rate that could easily be approximated by other states.

...it is not surprising that attention has turned to the standards by which practitioners are regulated, and to questions concerning the requirements of those who professionally practice the pursuit of wildlife control.

The number of animals trapped and relocated or killed because they are "nuisances" around homes and businesses is also largely undocumented, but probably runs into the hundreds

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Oversight of Wildlife Damage Control Operators

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The public that is experiencing wildlife damage need professional help to solve many of these problems. It now appears that if a private wildlife control operator (WCO) proposes to provide wildlife damage control services to property owners and managers, a flood of new regulations are required. It seems that some groups and organizations, in the name of animal protection, treat this situation as an opportunity to enact new laws and regulations to restrict the activities of those who provide wildlife damage control services. The WCO industry has become a stepping-stone for anti-trapping, anti-hunting and anti-animal use agendas at the expense of the general public. The states of MA, CA, WA, CO and AZ are examples of what can happen when political agendas replace scientific wildlife management.

NWCOA has taken the stand that regulations should address the property owner's right to protect their property, health and safety without the risk of criminal prosecution. NWCOA agrees there needs to be state wildlife agency oversight of damage control activities. These regulations must address the general oversight responsibilities of permitting and monitoring the actions of the permit holders. Minimum qualification testing along with reporting of data needed to monitor trends in wildlife damage provide oversight and benefit state wildlife agencies.

Most wildlife control services provided by WCOs are conducted on private property at the request of the property owner or manager. It is important to remember that the regu-

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of thousands, if not more, every year on a national scale. Given this, it is not surprising that attention has turned to the standards by which practitioners are regulated, and to questions concerning the requirements of those who professionally practice the pursuit of wildlife control. *Brammer et. al* (1994) and *La Vine et al.* (1996) conducted surveys of the states on nuisance wildlife control laws, and both identified a need to address statutory factors. Barnes (1995, 1997) and Bromely et. al (1995) have also focused critical attention on many aspects of the regulation of this emerging industry.

The HSUS surveyed the fifty states and the District of Columbia in 1998 and again in 2000 and also conducted legal research in an attempt to determine the extent of regulatory and statutory oversight (*Hadidian et. al*, in press). One product of this survey is a model "bill" (www.hsus.org/programs/government/state.html; scroll down to "Recommendations for Wildlife Control Operators") that attempts to summarize what we feel are the "best" state practices and combine those into a single set of recommendations.

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Your contributions to *The Probe* are welcome and encouraged. The deadline for submitting materials is the 15th of the month prior to publication. Opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of NADCA.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

February 4-6, 2002 - 8th Annual Wildlife Control Instructional Seminar, Imperial Palace, Las Vegas, NV. Sponsored by Wildlife Control Technology and the National Wildlife Control Operators Association. Contact Lisa at 815/286-3039; e-mail: wctech@ix.netcom.com; http://www.wctech.com

March 4-7, 2002 - 20th Vertebrate Pest Conference, Silver Legacy Hotel, Reno, NV. Sponsored by the Vertebrate Pest Council, this conference makes significant contributions toward understanding and resolving undesirable wildlife-human interactions and wildlife damage problems. The pre-registration cost will be $175/person, with an additional $40 for the optional Monday field trip. Pre-registration deadline is Feb. 8, 2002. Registration cost after this date or at the door will be $210. For information go to http://www.davis.com/~vpc/welcome.htm.

March 5-9, 2002 - 20th Annual Wildlife Rehabilitators Association Symposium, Sheraton St. Louis City Center, St. Louis MO. Information from: http://www.nwrawildlife.org; e- mail: nwra@nwrawildlife.org.

October 22-24, 2002 - 4th Joint Annual Meeting of: Bird Strike Committee USA/Canada, Sacramento International Airport, CA. Theme: practical Wildlife Control Techniques for Airports. Will include papers, posters and demonstrations on wildlife control techniques, new technologies, land-use issues, training, engineering standards, wildlife strike statistics, and habitat management. For further information go to www.birdstrike.org.

Wildlife Damage Management in the News

Coyote Attacks Increasing in California

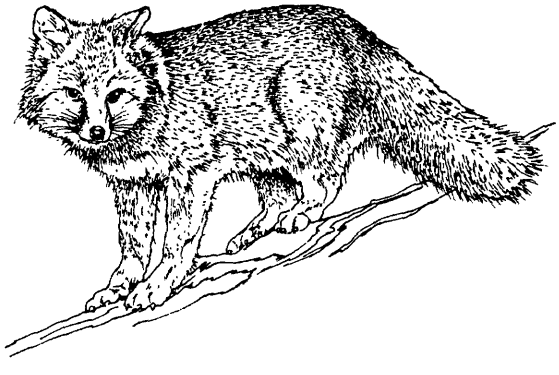
Nicki Frey, Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Jack H. Berryman Institute, Utah State University

When Californians move into communities on the outskirts of town and into former wild areas, confrontations with wildlife are expected. Unexpected is the movement and settling of wild animals, such as raccoons and coyotes, into dense suburban and urban areas. Biologists estimate that roughly 2000 coyotes live in the Los Angeles area. The number of coyote attacks has been increasing in California over the last decade, and has grown to include not only attacks on pets, but on children as well.

For example, a quick search of the LA Times for the year 2001 resulted in two reports of children attacked coyotes. In July, a boy was bitten while in a park in Orange County. In addition, two children were bitten in Orange County while on their lunch break at school in October. A similar search for 1999 resulted in one story concerning the danger of coyotes to house cats. Other cities are also reporting coyote attacks. In San Diego this past November, a girl was attacked by a coyote that she had been feeding in her backyard. In addition, a woman was bitten in a park near San Francisco in 1998, when a coyote approached a group of hikers. The woman was attacked while attempting to scare away the animal.

In the past few years, it has become increasingly common for cats and small dogs to be attacked by coyotes in search of easy prey. Across California and the Pacific Northwest, wildlife damage managers have started warning people to keep their pets inat night, and to keep a constant eye on small children, especially during the last months of summer when young coyotes venture out of their parent's territories on their own.

California Department of Fish and Game and the British Columbia chapter of the SPCA have created websites informing the public about coyote habits as well as listing "do's and don'ts" for handling and preventing coyote encounters. In addition, some communities in California are creating ordinances banning the feeding of coyotes and other wildlife.



Grizzly Management Plan Poses Dilemma

"Ranchers, hunters, farmers and environmentalists" in eastern Idaho have agreed to a plan for managing grizzly bears in the state should they be removed from the federal Endangered Species list says the Idaho Statesman 11/21. The plan allows the killing of bears which "eat livestock or threaten people" and authorizes a hunting season for "surplus or problem grizzly bears." The Idaho Fish & Game Commission is considering whether to send it on to the state legislature which would "force state leaders to confront management of the bear they have demonized in their campaign" to stop reintroduction into the Selway-Bitterroot wilderness.

*—from **GREENLines**, November 28, 2001, Issue #1515, www.stopextinction.org*Grizzly Management Plan

New Director for USDA/APHIS

Bobby R. Acord is the new Administrator for the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. This position has responsibility for protecting U.S. agricultural health from exotic pests and diseases; administering the Animal Welfare Act; and carrying out wildlife damage management activities.

Acord has served as the APHIS Acting Administrator since September 2001, and as Associate Administrator since 1999. Previously, he served nearly a decade as Deputy Administrator for APHIS' Wildlife Services program. He has received two Presidential Rank Awards for his contributions to resolving agricultural health problems for USDA. Acord is a graduate of West Virginia University, where he earned his bachelor's degree in animal science in 1966. After receiving his degree, he joined USDA and began a leave of absence to serve three years in the U.S. Army Veterinary Service. After completing this service, he returned to USDA where he held numerous field and headquarters positions.

—Mike Conover

The editor of **The PROBE** *thanks contributors to this issue: Michael Conover, Tim Julien, John Hadidian, Michele Childs, and Niki Frey.*

Oversight of Wildlife Damage Control Operators

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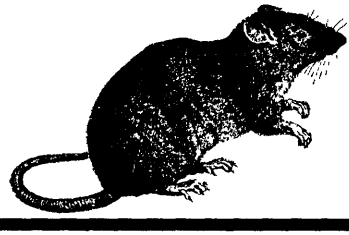
lations being proposed will regulate the measures taken to protect private property, health and safety.

The issue of regulating WCOs is being turned into an animal welfare and humane handling issue. Animal welfare and the humane treatment of animals are already important considerations for professional WCOs. Not only are these considerations important in terms of animal welfare, but they are important in terms of successful, professional business practices. Most of the recommendations that are being proposed to address these concerns could be considered solutions looking for problems.

NWCOA is in the process of rewriting their State Oversight Guideline Recommendations, currently there is a version that can be reviewed on the web at www.nwcoa.com. Input from many sources, including animal welfare groups, must be considered for a through review of any regulatory process.



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We have offered that document to the states as a starting point from which we hope discussion of the need for better oversight of this aspect of wildlife management will emanate. To a large extent, this project derives from what we feel to be substantial neglect to the regulation of the wildlife control industry. Our interest, of course, is in furthering the humane treatment of animals, but there are many other areas of concern, ranging from protection of the consumer to advancement of professionalism in the field of wildlife management that must be components of oversight, and for which we have attempted to account.

Given the history of interaction between many state and federal agencies and the animal welfare community we feel that the best chance to build better relationships lies in better communications. We feel that documents such as ours can only help clarify what at times are less than clear positions concerning complex issues. This is, to us, a first step - not a final word. There is a substantial amount of work to be done in this area that can only occur though cooperative effort. We have tried to make a start, not issue a challenge, with this document, and we look forward to what may follow.

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Barnes, T. G. 1995. A survey comparison of pest control and nuisance wildlife control operators in Kentucky. Proceedings of the Eastern Wildlife Damage Control Conference, 6:39-48.

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Graduate Students' Openings at Berryman Institute

MS or PhD Stipends
Jack H. Berryman Institute
Department of Fisheries and Wildlife
Utah State University

Each year, the Berryman Institute awards a number of research stipends to graduate students with an interest in wildlife damage management and resolving human-wildlife conflicts. Stipends are $10,000 per year plus free tuition.

If interested, please send a letter of interest, resume, GPA and GRE scores to:

Dr. Michael Conover, Director
conover@cc.usu.edu
Berryman Institute
Department of Fisheries and Wildlife
Utah State University
Logan, UT 84322-5210

Wildlife Damage Management in the News

But Could She Use the Car Pool Lane?

A terrified Norwegian woman shared her car with a rat for two weeks after failing to lure the animal into a trap.

The 6-inch long rodent, which sneaked out of a garbage bag and built a nest under the dashboard with discarded Norwegian crown bills and old receipts, was not tempted by a snap trap baited with cheese, sausage or minced beef.

"I'm disgusted. Imagine, I drove with that big, ugly thing right underneath my legs," Solveig Kristiansen, a 35-year-old consultant from southeast Norway, told Reuters.

The rat was finally killed when the woman baited the trap with liver pate.

She said she was hoping her insurance would cover the $1,100 to $2.200 it will cost to repair the damage to cables and car seats inflicted by the rat.

—excerpted from Reuters

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USDA Will Comply With Trapping Ban

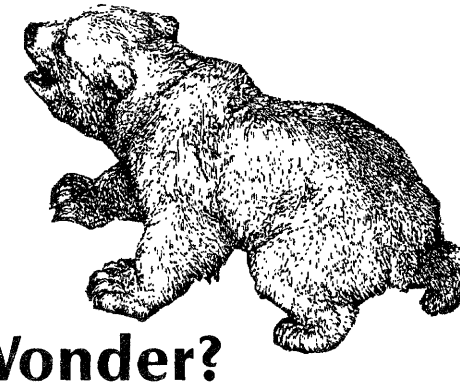
The USDA/APHIS Wildlife Services Division has decided to abide by Washington's trapping ban after receiving comments from the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and the state's Attorney General.

In November 2000, voters approved Initiative 713, a ban on trapping in Washington. The ban took effect January 1, 2001, but state lawyers did not believe the Widlife Services Division was governed by this initiative.

Recently, HSUS and Washington Attorney General Christine Gregoire asked Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman, to obey the state initiative.

"They asked us to voluntarily comply with the initiative and we are doing so," said Hallie Pickhardt, a spokeswoman for the Department of Agriculture.

Under the new policy, landowners seeking help from Wildlife Services must get a state permit exempting them from Initiative 713. The permit will only be issued if non- lethal methods are proven ineffective.



Ever Wonder?

Which of North America's wildlife species is the deadliest?

Based on the probability of an attack resulting in a human fatality, the answer is the polar bear. Thirty percent of all polar bear attacks are fatal to the person being attacked. In contrast, an average of only 10 people die annually in the U.S. from the over 5,000 poisonous snake bites which occur each year (0.2% fatality rate). Of course, a much higher proportion of snake bites are fatal in other countries where prompt medical attention is less available. The second deadliest animal in North America is the cougar (20% of all attacks results in a human fatality) followed by the grizzly bear (11% fatality rate), sharks (9%), black bear (5%), bison (4%), and alligator (3%).

Data from M. R. Conover. 2001. ***Resolving Human–Wildlife Conflicts: The Science of Wildlife Damage Management.*** *CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL.*

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