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How To Evaluate Wildlife Damage Control Programs

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HOW TO EVALUATE WILDLIFE DAMAGE CONTROL PROGRAMS*

I did not volunteer to substitute for Bill Pfeifer on the subject of "How to Evaluate Predator Control Programs" as an expert on this subject, but rather to: 1) point out that we recognize the need for good base information for describing effectiveness; and 2) relay how the Service's Animal Damage Control Program proposes to obtain it.

We recognize that we simply do not have adequate information for providing a meaningful evaluation of predator damage control efforts. This type of information is not easy to obtain--otherwise we would already have it. We have documentation of the number of trap, snare, and M-44 years of exposure, the hours of aerial hunting, and the numbers of animals taken. We have been gathering this type of information on Service animal damage control activities since the early 1900's.

We are aware, however, that years of effort and results in terms of animals taken does not provide a meaningful or acceptable measure of predator damage control effectiveness. This was recognized by J. N. Darling (Chief, Biological Survey) in his article "The Biological Survey's Predatory Animal Policy" published in the National Wool-grower, October 1934, and again by Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson in his statement made at the Division of Predator and Rodent Control Conference in Denver, Colorado, on December of 1941! Nevertheless, the basic problem still exists.

The Service is planning to gain essential information to describe the effectiveness of its Animal Damage Control (ADC) Program through a proposed ADC "Management Information System" (MIS). The MIS would standardize all of the data currently being gathered, and capture additional information on total resources (cattle, sheep, goats, poultry, etc.), percentage of resources being protected, land area and status (public, private, etc.), improved data on efforts by control method and species being protected, and the time, cost, and methods involved in resolving specific man/wildlife conflicts. All of the data would be comparable at least down to a county level.

According to plan, the proposed MIS should provide information to describe the relative effectiveness of various damage control methods in "resolving conflicts" --and provide a meaningful description of overall program effectiveness. We realize there will be some difficulties encountered in obtaining the information, that it will take time to work out the "bugs", and that it will not provide an immediate

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solution to our information needs. There will be gaps in our information which will be identified that will have to be filled over time through carefully designed research projects.

The proposed MIS is slowly moving ahead pending approval and purchase of computer hardware for initial field testing in the Service ADC Programs in California, Utah, New Mexico, and Ohio. The original plan was to have it already tested and implemented nation-wide at the beginning of FY80. At the current time, we are hopeful that implementation may be accomplished at the beginning of FY81 (October 1, 1980).

In summary, we desperately need the proposed MIS to establish a sound foundation upon which to develop a meaningful description of the what, where, when, why, and results of Service ADC efforts. The purpose being to:

- 1) identify program effectiveness**
- 2) describe program benefits**
- 3) provide useful data for making management decisions**
- 4) provide meaningful public information on what we are doing--and the results; not in terms of methods employed and animals taken, but rather in terms of resources protected and benefits derived.**

We are pushing for initial field testing and operational implementation as soon as possible.