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# Extension Program Planning for Predator Damage Control

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by

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Program planning for reduction of predator damage through the Extension approach normally involves producers, the county Extension agent and the Extension specialist in animal damage control. Please note that I will use the term "animal damage" rather than "wildlife damage", since free-ranging and feral dogs are frequently responsible for predator-caused losses and reducing these losses is equally as important as limiting losses to wild species.

## Agencies and Interest Groups

In addition to livestock producers, county agents and wildlife specialists, there are others who may be important to planning of predator damage reduction programs. These include private clubs which have interests, livestock organizations, county program planning committees, and municipal, county or state agencies which have direct responsibilities for damage control and/or interest in the results. Sixteen western states and many counties in these states have cooperative damage control agreements and programs with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Animal Damage Control (USFWS-ADC). Cooperation with USFWS-ADC program supervisors and other staff is, therefore, important in planning and development of Extension programs in these states and counties.

Some states have other agencies or organizations which are involved. For example, the Texas Animal Damage Control Association (TADCA) is an entity created by the state legislature which is responsible for administrating the funds contributed by the state to the cooperative program. The TADCA is an equal partner to the Texas Agricultural Extension Service of the Texas A&M University System and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Master cooperative agreement, and its chairman is a cosigner of the agreement.

State departments of agriculture, public health, and natural resources (fish, game, parks, etc.) may have direct interest and make significant contributions to development of necessary programs'.

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It is often important to involve other Extension and University staff who have related interests, or are conducting predator related research, to secure their input as well as to make them aware of specific problems and of needed research.

In some areas, urban residents and others who normally are not concerned with losses to predators may become interested due to predation on pets, outbreaks of disease, or for other reasons. Their needs and interests should also be considered in Extension program planning.

It is essential to recognize that some groups are opposed to damage control programs, particularly where they involve toxic chemicals, but many also oppose the use of traps, hunting and other mechanical methods. These groups are often highly vocal and influential and their comments and criticisms should be considered, if they are valid, to avoid planning errors. Since Extension programs for damage control are educational in nature, in contrast to those that are operational, it is sometimes possible to involve and inform such groups so that they are aware of the nature of damage situations and and essential means of alleviation.

## Program Planning, Development and Evaluation

Extension program planning is often described as a procedure which has specific sequential steps from initiation by an individual or interest group through the county Extension agent to the conduct and final evaluation of programs.

Perhaps ideally this is true and should be the goal in planning. In reality, planning may not follow this specific sequence for various reasons, among them being unexpected development of emergency situations of livestock losses, outbreaks of disease, deficiencies in personnel and funds, or for other reasons.

However the process is carried out, the goal is, and should always be, the most expedient, appropriate and effective approach to dealing with problems that must be resolved. In this context a planning procedure should not be so rigid as to restrict effective and needed programs. Flexibility to deal with circumstances that are unexpected is often critical to success.

The county Extension agent normally initiates requests to Extension specialists for programs related to the needs expressed by residents in his county. Depending on the specific structure of the Extension Service in a state, in addition to the county agents and specialist, there may be Area or District Extension Agents and Extension Project and/or Program Leaders involved in program planning to meet those needs.

Program development frequently requires joint meetings of key interest groups and industry leaders and representatives of agencies and organizations involved with the Extension staff. This is not only desirable in development of the most effective programs, it encourages support by those involved and greatly reduces potential error and misunderstanding caused by lack of communication.

Once developed, the program is normally carried out by the county agent and specialist involved, often with added support from other agencies and leaders from industry and other groups.

Evaluation of programs may not be adequate, perhaps because it is difficult to determine and quantify the degree of success in meeting program goals. Evaluation may be more difficult if planning has been hasty and incomplete. Nonetheless evaluation is essential to continuation of sound Extension programs directed to local needs.

## Extension Specialists Role

In the broad sense the traditional duties of Extension Specialists in most subject matter areas have included three major components:

1. Support of county Extension programs.
2. Support of other Extension specialists in related subject matter areas.
3. Liaison with research staff and support of research projects related to the specialists discipline.

These are also the major components of the Extension wildlife specialists' duties in animal damage control although they may be expressed in various ways. For example, one current job description for such a specialist lists the major responsibilities as follows:

1. Provide leadership for educational programs.
2. Provide information, training and teaching materials to strengthen the educational programs in wildlife damage control.
3. Assist in planning, executing, and economically evaluating methods and techniques, result demonstrations, tours, field days, and seminars for greater understanding of the wildlife damage problem and reduction of economic losses.

This third component would obviously include liaison with research staff and some degree of involvement in wildlife damage research. Lisison and cooperation with state fish and game, public health and agriculture departments, as well as USFWS, state, county and private ADC staff are essential to adequate Extension programs directed to solving damage problems. Frequently a team approach to crop or livestock production will involve several disciplines of which wildlife management and damage control are essential elements. Sheep and goat production are examples.

## Basic Needs for Program Planning

Since basic information and educational materials are essential to any Extension program, these must be developed from various sources, usually by the Extension specialist. As a result, animal damage specialists have specific related duties, some of which are these:

Develop a reference library

Develop and assemble visual aid materials

Develop training publications, materials and methods

Keep abreat of:

- laws, regulations and policies
- predator/predation related research
- new ideas, methods and products (including those which are ineffective, illegal, etc.)
- damage control needs, costs, zoonoses, etc.

Provide information on research needs and give appropriate support to research personnel

Provide assistance/counsel to agencies, organizations and individuals in development of appropriate research, laws, regulations, policies and programs

There are other responsibilities that may or may not be directly related to programs but are necessary and should be included in allocating specialists' time. Some of these are:

Serve on professional/scientific committees for societies, symposia, conferences, etc.

Serve on organizational review and planning committees

serve on editorial boards, review documents and manuscripts

Maintain professional improvement efforts

## Unplanned Activities

Although I will mention these only briefly, specialists are frequently required by the nature of their positions to assist agencies or conduct projects which are of an emergency nature or which cannot be foreseen. Some of these are not difficult but all take time.

However, proliferation of laws and regulations during the past decade relating to natural resources, pesticides and their use, animal damage control methods and programs, and other factors has altered the traditional role of ADC specialists and the historic job description is no longer adequate to describe discipline and responsibilities which have become increasingly complex. As a consequence extensive commitments of specialists' time and effort may be required on projects for which they have little time or opportunity to plan. Among these are ad hoc committee assignments to provide information and/or comments at public hearings on natural resources, the use of pesticides, animal damage control, etc.

More and more an inordinate amount of time is required to review, comment and respond to policy statements and proposed regulations from all levels of government. Environmental analyses have become an intergral part of the governmental process and the review of and response to environmental impact statements are now essential if a modicum of reason is to remain in resource management and damage control. Thus, normal planning and programs to deal with serious animal damage problems are progessively diminished by the insidious demands on time imposed by this paper "blizzard". In addition, there is continued erosion of effective ADC programs by the increasing restrictions on ADC methods. These factors must be considered in program planning, development and evaluation.

## Related Factors

Many of the basic problems and needs were reviewed in the panel discussion on vertebrate animal damage control during the National Extension Wildlife and Fisheries Workshop, April 26-28, 1977 at San Antonio, Texas. This discussion included comments from a majority of the Extension wildlife specialists in the United States, as well as other professionals in wildlife management and damage control. The summary of that discussion graphically describes the problems and needs in animal damage control as well as related issues in the political arena. I have appended a copy of the summary since it does describe and list these major factors.

One essential point made in the summary is the general need for "Recognition that providing information is effective and useful in practical terms only if methods to solve a problem exist and can be employed." A specific need pointed out in the summary is "Availability of all effective methods of damage control and flexibility in choosing and applying those most suitable for each case where control is needed." It is common knowledge among those who deal with predator damage that no single method is consistently effective in solving problems. The only exception, and one which has limited application for various reasons, is total exclusion of predators from livestock ranges.

However, legal and policy restrictions on methods and programs continue to increase. The recent decision by the secretary of the Department of the Interior to severely restrict the USFWS-ADC program is the latest in a litany of such events. While the Secretary's decision will increase the need for Extension efforts in the affected states, information on effective, legally available methods will not be sufficient to resolve many of the more difficult predator damage problems. Therefore, while Extension staff must continue to provide programs which emphasize the use of legal damage control methods, we can expect the use of other methods to continue and to increase in critical loss areas throughout the western states.