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TWELFTH GREAT PLAINS WILDLIFE DAMAGE CONTROL WORKSHOP SUMMARY

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Page 3 *in* R.E. Masters and J.G. Huggins, eds. Twelfth Great Plains Wildl. Damage Control Workshop Proc., Published by Noble Foundation, Ardmore, Okla.

Key words: wildlife damage management, workshop summary.

Wildlife damage management continues to grow, develop, and adapt as a profession. It is recognized as an important profession which has its foundation in alleviating human-wildlife conflicts. One indication of its importance is the support received for this workshop from various groups and organizations. Financial and other support for this workshop from private foundations, universities, Federal, state, professional, and private organizations was outstanding.

The Twelfth Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop was attended by 191 participants from 31 states and 1 Canadian province. A total of 37 papers were presented at the workshop of 45 submitted. Two additional papers appear in this proceedings that were not presented. Both of these had been accepted by the program committee, but the authors had to cancel presentations at the last minute.

Although many of the same subject areas addressed in previous workshops were covered, a number of papers broke new ground. Particularly, papers dealing with biodiversity, endangered species protection, and the Environmental Assessment process linked wildlife damage management with a range of broader issues that face us presently and in the future. Other papers dealt with unique ways of managing the serious problems of rabies outbreaks in Texas, with many agencies working together to solve the problem.

The Plenary Session had as its focus those areas that were developing most rapidly and were most requested in the call for topics. Bobby Acord reemphasized the changing nature of wildlife damage management as a profession and especially the changing nature of our constituency. Along with these changes, Jim Miller encouraged researchers to focus on needed research in traditional areas addressed by wildlife damage management (new techniques, particular species, etc.), but also emphasized a need for human dimensions research.

Later in the Plenary Session, Jim Armstrong provided strong evidence that the attitude differences between wildlife damage control managers and animal rights activists are currently at opposing extremes. He also pointed out that the vast majority of people are somewhere in-between those extremes and that continued efforts should be made to reach and educate this large group on the function and role of wildlife damage management in our increasingly urbanized society.

Human health concerns were addressed by John Fisher and current information given about some of the diseases of special interest to those working in this field, such as Lyme disease and the hanta virus. He provided suggestions to minimize exposure and risk when working with animals that may have to be caught and handled. Finally, Lowell Miller informed participants of the direction of immunocontraception research and the feasibility and possible applications in helping wildlife damage managers to better do their job.

The workshop emphasized papers on birds, deer, rodents, predator control, and a variety of techniques, philosophies, attitudes, and quantifying wildlife damage. A wide variety of wildlife species were covered and a wide variety of issues and program types were presented and discussed. The presenters are to be highly commended for the excellent presentations and sometimes lively discussion that followed. Presentations were from many parts of the country and the ideas shared will continue to benefit participants and readers of the proceedings alike.

The field trip was well attended and well organized by George Graves and his Oklahoma ADC staff. It received high marks from the workshop participants. Evaluations of the workshop indicated that the first open forum panel discussion, which focused on the predator paradigm, was 1 of the major highlights. Dale Rollins did a tremendous job of putting together a variety of speakers to address an often emotionally charged subject. From the response received, a similar panel discussion or open forum probably should become an annual event at the Great Plains. This setting offers a situation in which to address issues that are controversial or particularly timely in nature.

Human-wildlife interactions will need to be addressed on a continuing basis well into the future. However, our collective role as wildlife damage managers is changing rapidly and new issues arise as society changes. Our role of reducing or properly managing conflicts is important to the well being of society. We must recognize our role in educating the public about our work as professional wildlife damage managers and about our dedication to the resource.