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September 1989

# THE USDA-APHIS-ADC PROGRAM IN THE UNITED STATES

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*Animal Damage Control, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA*

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# THE USDA-APHIS-ADC PROGRAM IN THE UNITED STATES

Bobby R. Acord 1/

## ABSTRACT

The ADC program was transferred to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service in 1986. Shortly after the transfer, the Secretary of Agriculture established the National Animal Damage Control Advisory Committee (NADCAC). Current and future issues facing ADC are discussed in the context of NADCAC recommendations.

I appreciate the opportunity to address this group today. I'd like to share with you some thoughts on how the Animal Damage Control (ADC) program operates, and discuss some of the factors involved in determining how we operate. As most of you are aware, the ADC program was transferred from the U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (USDI-FWS) to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) about 3 years ago. The APHIS-ADC mission continues to be the protection of American agriculture and other resources from wildlife damage. Problems we deal with include:

-Bird depredations on crops, livestock, feedlots, and aquaculture facilities.

-Rodent damage to crops, rangelands, reforestation, and stored grain.

-Carnivore depredation on livestock and wildlife.

-Rodent and bird damage to structures and facilities.

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-Human health and safety problems including wildlife as disease vectors and wildlife hazards to aircraft.

The control methods we use or recommend to deal with these types of problems emphasize the principles of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). IPM is a relatively new term to describe the way that we really have always done business. IPM involves consideration and application of any or all practical control methods to most effectively resolve wildlife damage problems while minimizing harmful effects of control measures on humans, other species, and the environment.

The work we do is accomplished through cooperative efforts initiated only at the request of the entities experiencing damage. Our programs typically involve other Federal, State, and/or local agencies, various citizen interest groups, and other cooperators. We employ two primary modes of operation: technical assistance and direct operational control.

Technical assistance is provided as advice, information, and materials for others to use in managing animal damage problems and understanding animal damage control principles and techniques. If appropriate, technical assistance is usually given primary consideration in resolving problems. However, the selection of the most appropriate mode of operation is determined by field personnel based on the nature of the problem, practicality of approach, likelihood of

resolution, and availability of resources, and is agreed upon by the party requesting the assistance.

Direct operational control consists of actual control operations conducted or supervised by ADC personnel in the field. Direct control operations are implemented to the extent resources allow if it is determined that the problem is not likely to be resolved by providing technical assistance.

Operational ADC programs are cooperative from the standpoint of planning and direction and funding support. Some of the most successful cooperative ADC programs involve a sharing of Federal and non-Federal funds at or near the 50:50 level. The non-Federal share of funding is most often in the form of appropriations made available through State Departments of Agriculture, State resource management agencies, or County ADC boards. Additional funds are often provided through cooperative agreements with County Commissioners, producer groups, or other organizations desiring assistance in resolving wildlife damage problems. The long term success of operational ADC programs has been achieved through a flexible program structure capable of accommodating cooperator's needs, and the active participation of cooperators in program financing and management.

Shortly after the transfer of our program to USDA, the Secretary of Agriculture established the National Animal Damage Control Advisory Committee (NADCAC). The purpose of the committee has been to make recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture on

policies and program issues regarding wildlife damage control. NADCAC is composed of 20 members chosen from nominees by the agriculture industry, conservation and environmental groups, land use groups, and wildlife agencies. The diverse background of this group helps ensure that their policy recommendations are economically feasible, environmentally sensitive, and biologically sound.

The Advisory Committee held their first meeting in Washington D.C. in July, 1988, and a second meeting last December in Denver. A third meeting will be held in January, 1990 in Washington D.C.

NADCAC has been very supportive of ADC, and their recommendations have been extremely helpful in guiding the program. I'd like to discuss some of these recommendations and the status of our program in acting on them.

When NADCAC first convened last year, they were initially concerned about the APHIS reorganization and the possible effects it might have on the ADC program. Our basic organizational structure within the ADC operational program consists of our headquarters office in Washington, D.C., and Hyattsville, Maryland, and our field offices divided into an Eastern and Western region, and is unchanged by the reorganization. The Eastern Regional office is located in Nashville, Tennessee, and has administrative responsibility for our State offices in 31 Eastern States. The Western Regional office is located in Denver, Colorado, and is responsible for our State offices in 17 Western States,

Alaska and Hawaii. Our Pocatello Supply Depot, where animal damage control materials and supplies are manufactured and sold, is located in the Western Region but reports directly to the Deputy Administrator's office.

Conflicts between expanding human and wildlife populations are being recognized throughout the U.S. as serious problems, and interest in the ADC program is high. Funding to meet the increasing need for animal damage control was a critical concern of the advisory committee during their first meeting, and they recommended an increase in the FY 1990 ADC budget and all future budgets to adequately address this need. Congress has responded by increasing funding for ADC. We've gone from a budget of 19.4 million at the time of the transfer to a proposed budget of 29.8 million for FY 1990. The committee also recognized the need for expanded cooperative programs to meet the increasing need for animal damage control work. We've been developing a number of cooperatively funded operational programs in the East, and there is widespread support for developing more of these programs. Right now we have cooperative beaver control programs to protect timber in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Mississippi, trout streams in Wisconsin, and endangered freshwater mussel habitat in Louisiana. We also have cooperative damage control programs for deer and bear in New Hampshire, coyote control in New York, and squirrel control for maple syrup producers in Vermont. Cooperative bird damage control programs in the East include Canada goose control in Wisconsin and Tennessee, gull control at a

U.S. Army facility in Michigan, a nuisance grackle control program in Georgia, and an agreement with the Federal Aviation Administration to control birds at airports in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Part of the budget increase for FY 1990 will be used to begin cooperative programs in those States that already have funds set aside for this purpose.

One of the first concerns identified by the Committee was the need for completion of a programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). To comply with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements, an EIS was first prepared for the ADC program in 1979 by the FWS. The original EIS addressed only the Western predator control program conducted by ADC. The new EIS addresses all aspects of our entire program nationwide. We have been working closely with the EIS contractor, Dames & Moore, and the Draft EIS is scheduled for release in January. A Final EIS will be prepared following incorporation of public and agency comments on the Draft EIS, and should be available by September, 1990. This document will provide guidelines for decisions on future ADC program efforts. It will also provide other Federal agencies with information needed to prepare environmental assessments (EA's) in compliance with NEPA.

NADCAC identified a critical need to gather information on animal damage problems for use by the ADC program. A large segment of the American public is unable to support the science and practice of wildlife damage control because neither the economic significance of the damage nor the benefits provided

by control are well understood. This lack of understanding and support is compounded by increased societal concern for the environment, wildlife resources, and animal welfare. Currently available data and other information are inadequate to fully answer the public's questions about the extent and distribution of resource damage, effectiveness of control tools, and the significant contributions, benefits, and environmental impacts of wildlife damage control. Information on the types and amounts of resource damage created by various species is needed for use in program planning and establishment of goals. Over the last several months, we have worked with the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) to develop a comprehensive survey for gathering information on types of problems and extent of losses. NASS has just recently completed this first survey involving 20,000 farms and ranches from across the nation, and we will soon begin using these results to help make decisions on our program's emphasis, direction, and funding.

In addition to this new information provided by NASS, our program needs information that allows us to assess program effort and costs, evaluate management controls, and recommend improvements. We are currently collecting information on program activities through our own Management Information System (MIS). The MIS is a computer based system that records, processes, stores, and reports information that pertains to the operational activities of the program. We are currently expanding and modernizing this system to meet

our growing needs. The MIS was developed in the late 1970's to assist with the informational needs of western State programs, but it only became operational in 6 of our western States. The MIS records and maintains data on resources, damage, control methods used, and animals taken. Because of equipment obsolescence, however, and the need for a uniform system to serve the entire ADC program, the current system has reached its effective limits. A long-range project has been initiated to redesign the system using updated, state-of-the-art hardware and software, and we believe it will improve the overall efficiency of the ADC program. The new system is expected to be operational in all States in 2 years.

The information gained through a nationwide ADC information system, in conjunction with surveys conducted by NASS or other cooperators, will assist our program to establish services in harmony with the wants and needs of the agricultural community and the American public. Benefits will accrue through improved cost-effective and selective application of control measures, improved use of human resources, better monitoring and projection capabilities, and more equitable and judicious use of appropriated funds. Moreover, other agencies and legislative bodies will be better informed and able to make correct decisions affecting wildlife damage control, support for control will improve, the public will suffer less from unfounded fears and concerns, and wildlife damage to American's resources will be reduced.

Animal damage control research was another subject of

critical concern to the advisory committee, and they made two recommendations relative to this issue. This is one of the most critical issues facing our program right now for a variety of reasons. There were several actions in 1988 which raised concerns about some of the current control tools we use. An agricultural county in California passed a county ordinance banning steel leghold traps as a method of animal control. A circuit court in Minnesota forced the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to cancel aboveground uses of strychnine. EPA also proposed cancellation of strychnine and Compound 1080 registrations for failure to comply with previous data-calls. The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) was amended to add registration maintenance fees which would be used to re-register all old chemicals over the next 9 years. These and similar pressures and public concerns have caused us to be more concerned about finding alternative control tools and techniques.

In the years prior to the transfer of ADC, minimal effort was directed toward applied research which would strengthen the program's ability to perform and contribute to development of alternative tools, or support existing tools with new data. Sufficient resources were not devoted to data collection for support of pesticides; consequently large backlogs of data needs accumulated and left ADC with a large mortgage on its current and future resources if pesticide registrations were to be maintained. This situation has been compounded by amendments to FIFRA and regulatory changes by EPA which

have added new data requirements for product registration and maintenance. In addition, ADC's research facility, the Denver Wildlife Research Center (DWRC) was not adequately maintained nor were funds provided to comply with the Good Laboratory Practices of EPA and the Animal Welfare Act. Major improvements have been made at DWRC to bring the facility into compliance with these regulations, but these actions have taken a disproportionate share of resources from actual research.

NADCAC recommended continued maintenance of all existing ADC pesticide registrations and the pursuit of additional registrations for 1080 rodenticides and a single dose predicide, as well as a registration for CPT (3-chloro-4-methyl benzenamine) as a blackbird roost toxicant. While we have also identified these registrations as high priorities through our own internal research prioritization process, the majority of our resources being expended currently are to maintain existing registrations. Work to maintain pesticide registrations has become one of the major functions at DWRC. Pesticide registration is a complicated and expensive process, but we recognize it as a necessary investment if we're to continue to provide the public with an acceptable, effective program.

An additional recommendation made by the committee as a result of their first meeting was that a comprehensive ADC policy manual be developed. Our program had been operating under the old FWS ADC Manual since the time of the transfer, but many of the policies were in need of revision and in some cases additional new policies were

needed. The increasing diversity of our program to meet new demands, together with increasing environmental and political concerns had created a critical need for a new policy manual. A major effort by staff members from our Eastern and Western regions and our headquarters office has resulted in release of a new ADC Policy Manual that we feel will facilitate a uniformly high standard of performance by all ADC personnel.

During the second NADCAC meeting, the committee deliberated on the issue of working relationships between ADC and other cooperating Federal agencies. A critical concern was the cooperation between ADC and FWS in resolving migratory bird damage problems. These problems include waterfowl and blackbird depredation on grain crops, nuisance waterfowl problems in urban areas, depredations by fish-eating birds at aquaculture facilities, and bird/aircraft strike hazards at airports. While ADC is responsible for addressing these problems, we have encountered some obstacles because we have had no management or regulatory authority. This authority lies with the FWS, and the Advisory Committee formally recommended that the Director of the FWS and the Administrator of APHIS get together to work toward resolving some of the regulatory obstacles to dealing with these problems. We're optimistic about these negotiations and we anticipate being able to solve these problems more effectively in the near future.

Another area of particular concern was the working relationship between ADC and the Forest Service (FS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The

issue of predator control on public lands is coming under increasing public scrutiny. A bill was introduced into the U.S. Senate this year to restrict predator control on public lands, and this has resulted in a General Accounting Office inquiry into this issue. Significant numbers of the public today are opposed to any kind of organized predator control program being conducted on public lands. On the other hand, the livestock industry at times suffers tremendous losses to predators on these lands, and this industry relies on ADC to help protect their resources. The FS and BLM are becoming very cautious and often more restrictive in allowing predator control on these lands. Increasingly these agencies want to dictate types of control tools used as well as the placement and timing of their use. These decisions are often being made by managers with limited or no animal damage control expertise in response to pressure from the public and environmental groups. This has made it more difficult at times for us to carry out our mission. We continue to work closely with FS and BLM policy officials, and are optimistic that we'll be able to address concerns on both sides of the issue and still do our part to protect the agricultural resource.

I'd like to focus now on the future of the ADC program, and discuss some of the things we see as challenges now and in the years ahead. ADC's Top Management Team (TMT) has invested a major effort in the development of a Strategic Long Range Plan to guide our program over the next three to five years. In developing this plan, we considered the apparent strengths and weaknesses of our

present program, external influences and relationships, and conditions that would ensure continued program vitality. I've already discussed some of the aspects of this plan in the context of the NADCAC recommendations, but I'd like to cover several additional points.

We are working on plans to deal with a potentially serious human resource management problem that we're presently heading for. Within the next 3 to 5 years, we expect to experience a 40-50% turnover in our supervisory wildlife biologist work force due to retirements. Two years ago we hired the first ever Supervisory Training Program class in ADC. These 20 wildlife biologists have already undergone 2 years of on-the-job training and have become a vital part of our work force, but additional recruitment and development efforts will be necessary to meet the program's needs. Another recruitment avenue we'll be employing more is that of cooperative education students. We are seeing more incorporation of ADC issues and functions in the curriculum at some major universities, and we're working with some of these institutions to develop cooperative education programs. We will also be placing more emphasis on development of our existing work force through the creation and filling of additional Assistant State Director and Assistant District Supervisor positions. It is becoming increasingly important to the future of our program to fill key managerial and staff positions with employees that are qualified and experienced in animal damage control. Our best chance to improve the leadership and overall effectiveness of the program lies in our ability to

place talented, capable people with ADC experience in these leadership positions.

One area that we have made great progress in, but that we still need to work on, is in professionalizing the policies and practice of wildlife damage management. Animal damage control is a vital function of a sound wildlife management program, and this work affects people's lives and livelihoods daily. While we are gaining increasing acceptance and support in the professional wildlife management community, there still exists a strong need to promote this acceptance at every opportunity. Attendance and participation at professional meetings such as this must be encouraged. We benefit not only from the continuing education that attendance at these meetings provides, but also from increased credibility and improved relationships. We need to begin reaching more of the public with accurate information on all aspects of wildlife damage control. If we do this job well, and continue to operate responsible programs, our future will remain bright.

The focus of our efforts in ADC will be expanding in the future to accommodate new demands. We will continue to provide services in those areas that have historically been important to our cooperators, such as predator damage control, but we'll also begin providing increasing levels of service to address other problems that have grown significantly in recent years. One of these problems involves the rapidly growing aquaculture industry in the U.S., particularly in some of our Southeastern States. The growth of this industry has been

accompanied in some cases by expanding local populations of some fish-eating birds, particularly cormorants. The aquaculture industry suffers tremendous losses annually to depredations by these birds, and we're investing more resources now in trying to address this issue. The Denver Wildlife Research Center established a new field station in Mississippi this year specifically to begin conducting research on methods to address this growing problem.

The aquaculture industry is not the only interest suffering the consequences of the rapidly growing populations of some migratory birds. In some areas of the country, local populations of Canada geese have increased significantly, creating problems not only through crop depredations, but also significant nuisance problems in urban areas. We will continue to address these and other growing migratory bird problems to the extent that our program resources allow, and will work toward closer cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to address these issues.

Animal Damage Control is facing significant challenges today and in the near future. There is a strong need for a solid information base to educate the public on the significance of wildlife damage control. Expanding human and wildlife populations continue to create increasing conflicts that must be dealt with, and we're faced with a need to develop new, more effective and acceptable control methods to resolve these conflicts. These challenges are recognized by USDA and the Secretary's Advisory Committee, and long-range plans have been developed

to deal with them. ADC has a highly motivated work force to implement these plans, our employee morale is high, and we look forward to providing a continuing high level of service to the American public.