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ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF AGENCIES FOR WILDLIFE DAMAGE CONTROL

by Hal S. Atkinson, Jr.*

The wildlife resources of the State belong to the people of the state as a whole. The Wildlife Resources Commission is charged with the stewardship of these resources and is empowered by general statute to promulgate those regulations deemed necessary to accomplish this charge.

The Commission administers a management program designed to maintain wildlife populations at acceptable levels from both the sportsman's and landowners perspective. However, at times, both game and nongame species are involved in various conflicts with our human population. Our general statutes allow an owner or lessee of property to take without prior state approval any wildlife in the act of committing depredations upon the property.

However in an effort to encourage the best use of our wildlife resources, the Commission works cooperatively with other state and federal agencies having regulatory responsibilities toward animal damage control to develop and maintain a system of depredation permits applicable to most wildlife-human conflict situations. By utilizing the professional expertise of other wildlife, environmental, educational and agricultural related agencies, our program can address a broad range of animal damage problems.

The rapid population growth of North Carolina accompanied by increasing urban sprawl has introduced a new type of animal damage control problem. Urban wildlife depredation complaints now equal in number the more traditional agricultural related problems. Resident migratory wildfowl as well as endangered and nongame species are involved in more conflicts with subdivision development. This is a new problem that will require more interagency cooperation in the future.

Animal damage control programs should be a vital part of any wildlife agency. Properly executed permitting systems and the accompanying educational process can ensure continued public understanding and support for our wildlife resource programs.

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