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ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL: ARE WE PREPARED FOR THE NEXT CENTURY?

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I am pleased to be here with you today to discuss Animal Damage Control (ADC). I am also very pleased to see the number of ADC people attending this conference. It is an important indication of our professionalism. During the past several months, I have spoken to many of our people in ADC to challenge them to think about the future of our program. I have also spoken to many of our cooperators such as livestock organizations and resource management agencies about the same thing. This has been done in an effort to broaden our thinking about animal damage control as a service or profession, and as a program delivering that professional service.

We are controlled by our paradigm which might be described as the lens of our mind's eye. It might also be called the sum total of our experiences that govern how we see things or interpret what our eyes see. Over the years, a paradigm has been created about ADC which to the "non-user" or observer of our program has been extremely negative. This in turn has resulted in another paradigm by the service beneficiaries and professionals within the program which has become competitive with the other. Over the years, this has produced highly independent thinking and action by each group operating within the constraints of their own paradigm.

In ADC, this independence has produced a mind set so strong that it has become life-threatening to our program and the profession. We have to realistically confess that in maintaining this independence we have been narrow-minded, even close-minded to new ideas. Our thinking had become so homogenous that new ideas or thoughts which did not meet our "tradition test" or were outside our paradigm were viewed with suspicion, and those who harbored such thoughts were ostracized by their peers. Our thinking was so inbred and our defense mechanism so strong that opportunities for change could not even be seen, much less acted upon. We became so independent and caught up in our paradigm that anyone who criticized the program or its actions was viewed with the same suspicion; we made no distinction between constructive professional or scientific critique and the views of animal welfarists or animal rightists. We were so programmed to act within the ADC paradigm that it began to act as a rope around our necks; the more we struggled, the tighter it got—to the point we almost hanged ourselves.

At the same time, those who were observers of the program, or the self-appointed public police of wildlife management, continued to narrow the focus

of their paradigm. They viewed the work involved in animal damage control as unnecessary and detrimental to the wildlife profession. Practitioners in animal damage control were disenfranchised from the wildlife management profession. In order to focus more sharply on the program actions and draw attention to "perceived abuses," the lethal methods used by ADC received disproportionate attention. The program was given no credit for its efforts to develop or use non-lethal control, and the stigma of an "environmental hazard" was pinned on all ADC work. So strong was this view that wildlife damage control was itself nearing extinction as a specialization within the wildlife management profession. This highly independent way of thinking became so perverse that no thought was given to the impact on the wildlife resource, its habitat, or those who own or manage the habitat.

As we look at the challenges or opportunities that confront us in preparation for the next century, it is obvious that we must reach a more interdependent level of thinking. As Stephen Covey writes in his recent book, "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People," we need to make a "paradigm shift." Not only do we need a new paradigm, we must guard against simply developing modifications of the old ones which will continue to limit our thinking. Consider if you will the background of those who currently set policies for wildlife management. We are several generations away from a society with first-hand knowledge or practice in "animal use." Parents, grandparents, teachers, and students view nature and wildlife from afar. It is no longer a part of their day-to-day life. Employees of the federal and state governments who are in charge of wildlife policies do not necessarily have a tradition of consumptive use of wildlife. Members of Congress who set the laws relative to wildlife and ecology are increasingly from urban backgrounds and

lack the traditional orientation toward consumptive use of wildlife. We will have to find a way to work interdependently with people at this level of experience. We can no longer afford the kind of thinking that always presumes a win/lose scenario.

So, if we are in charge of animal damage control for the next century, we must create a new vision around what we will be facing in that century. Probably first and foremost in our vision is to realize that we are starting from such a negative position that simply redoubling our efforts is too little too late. We need quantum leaps!! In creating our vision of the next century, we must forge a new paradigm that has a win/win orientation, that gives us the energy to rise above our past and one that is tradition based—not tradition bound!!

As we shift our level of thinking from the constraint of what next month or next year will bring, to what the next decade or century will be like, here are some things I believe we can expect:

The need for managing wildlife damage will be at its greatest level in decades. Our efforts toward conservation will have achieved population levels no one dreamed of. The contribution of private trappers toward wildlife damage control will be curtailed because of severe restrictions on trapping and lack of use of fur. We are already seeing the results of this with declining waterfowl populations. Predator populations have risen because of lack of take by fur trappers. Predators are now the number one limiting factor to some increasing waterfowl populations.

Habitat recovery will not have kept pace with population levels thereby producing greater and more frequent conflict with human interest. Public tolerance for wildlife problems will diminish, creating more pressure for damage management.

Traditional chemical and/or lethal controls will be publicly unacceptable. Traditional steel leghold traps will likely be limited to wildlife damage control or disease management. Alternative methods of control will be required and must involve reproductive inhibitors, genetically engineered organisms, electronics, and other types of "Star Wars" technology. The concerns for our environment will be so great and the control methods so complicated that only college-trained biologists who can be held publicly accountable will be allowed to conduct control operations.

Organizations will be more accountable to the public for the issues they raise and their methods for raising funds. We need only look at PTL and other recent fraudulent activity in religious organizations to realize what can happen.

Data on population dynamics of each species will be required as a prerequisite for any control actions.

A new sense of "animal use" will evolve due to our intolerance for extremist points

of view—whether it is extreme overcontrol or no control at all. The education efforts of resource users will slow the current trend against animal use.

A higher degree of professionalism will be required of all practitioners, and the emphasis will shift to wildlife damage management rather than animal control. A more holistic approach to damage management will be required. Wildlife damage management will once again be a mainstream part of the wildlife management profession.

Wildlife damage will shift from an agricultural focus to a broader spectrum that includes public health and safety concerns, protection of property and natural resources, and achieving recovery for endangered, threatened and protected species.

The cost of managing damage will at least quadruple. Because of society's high regard for wildlife, the public is not likely to object.

If the foregoing ideas are the framework for our profession in the next century, where should our preparation for change start? Let me share with you some things ADC has already undertaken and some new ideas the profession needs to champion:

First, we must begin with a new paradigm. We can no longer afford the internal win/lose struggle within the

profession. We in ADC must open our minds to new thinking and new methods and earn a new level of trust among our peers.

An unparalleled and unprecedented effort must be undertaken in research. Every method we currently use is under attack, and we are frequently unable to supply data to defend them. Alternative methods must become a reality rather than a phrase. An investment must be made in research that spans our own internal efforts and includes land grant universities and major resource managers. The financing must be cost-shared by the federal and state governments, universities, conservation organizations, and even animal rights and animal welfare organizations. These organizations can no longer be allowed to simply identify the problem. They must be part of the solution—including financing. Lack of research in my view is the single greatest impediment to our future preparedness.

We must create a new professional sensitivity and image for animal damage control specialists, and the program itself. This includes professional standards, education requirements, interaction with professional societies and peer groups, and an organizational name that is more reflective of our responsibilities.

Wildlife damage control must reappear as a significant part of the curriculum in wildlife biology and ecology degree programs. Universities must once again become the focal point for wildlife damage science that blunts the current perversion of anti-management. We are contributing to this effort through a curriculum development program at Utah State University. We hope this will be a model for others to follow.

A major effort must be devoted to collecting data on wildlife. This must go beyond the current efforts directed toward game species. It must include all wildlife species—resident and migratory—and include damage, habitat availability, and trend forecasts. We have made some strides in this direction with fish-eating birds. However, we have only set a trend with no end in sight.

A program to improve the public relations aspect of wildlife damage management must be undertaken. If we do not make significant progress in this area, our job will be made significantly more difficult. This is not just a job for ADC, it is for state fish and wildlife agencies, universities, and any other agencies responsible for natural resource management. We have started by developing a public relations plan and placing a public affairs representative in the Western Region.

Perhaps most important of all our actions may also be the most simple—becoming proactive in our profession. We are in charge of the future. We hold the professional credentials to define the future issues—to set the standards. Words and phrases like creative, innovative, win/win, compromise, and ethics will be important ingredients of our preparation for the next century.

Are we prepared for the next century? As a profession, as a program—we will be prepared. As individuals we will have to make that choice—each of us. Tradition is a very important part of our past, but it is equally important to our future. Whether we use it as a foundation or a ceiling for our personal and professional growth will determine our preparedness for the next century.