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WILDLIFE DAMAGE TO CROPS: PERCEPTIONS OF AGRICULTURAL
AND WILDLIFE PROFESSIONALS IN 1957 AND 1987

Michael R. Conover^{1/} and Daniel J. Decker^{2/}

ABSTRACT

We surveyed state wildlife agencies, state agricultural departments, Wildlife Extension Specialists, U.S.D.A. Animal Damage Control agents, and state Farm Bureau officials to develop a national perspective of wildlife damage to agricultural crops in the U.S. A broad consensus existed that wildlife damage was a major problem, although groups often differed in their perceptions of the seriousness of specific problems. The complexity of the wildlife damage problem was apparent in that 27 different wildlife species were cited as causing the greatest problem to a state's farmers. Nevertheless, 38-80% of the respondents from every group surveyed stated that deer were their worst problem. Most respondents believed that wildlife damage had increased in the last 30 years. Increasing levels of wildlife damage also were apparent when we compared our findings to those of a similar survey conducted in 1957 (McDowell and Pillsbury 1958). For instance in 1957, 16 states reported that deer were either no problem or only caused localized problems, while in our survey, 15 of these 16 states stated that deer were now causing more damage to crops than any other wildlife species.

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