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Clay, William H., "An Overview Of Animal Damage Control (ADC) Assistance To The Vertebrate Pest Management Industry" (1996). *Proceedings of the Seventeenth Vertebrate Pest Conference 1996*. 8. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/vpc17/8>

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AN OVERVIEW OF ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL (ADC) ASSISTANCE TO THE VERTEBRATE PEST MANAGEMENT INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT: The Animal Damage Control (ADC) program has had a long history dating back to 1885. ADC was officially established in 1931 under the United States Department of Agriculture. In 1939, the program was moved to the United States Department of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service. In 1996, ADC was transferred back to the USDA and placed under the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. The mission of the Animal Damage Control program is to provide federal leadership in managing problems caused by wildlife. Current program assistance includes: a) technical assistance in wildlife management; b) conducting research and development activities related to wildlife damage control; c) providing a source for a variety of animal damage control tools; d) development and transfer of scientific and technical information on wildlife damage issues; e) helping obtain migratory bird depredation permits; f) providing training sessions on wildlife damage management issues; and g) registering and maintaining chemical products for wildlife management.

KEY WORDS: animal damage control, vertebrate pest management, federal animal damage control program.

Proc. 17th Vertebr. Pest Conf. (R.M. Timm & A.C. Crabb, Eds.) Published at Univ. of Calif., Davis. 1996.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide you with an overview of the different types of assistance that we provide to the vertebrate pest management industry. The Animal Damage Control (ADC) program has a long history of involvement and service in this area. In fact, the Federal Government's involvement in wildlife damage control efforts first occurred back in 1885 when the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Branch of Economic Ornithology sent questionnaires to farmers about damage caused by birds. The very next year, the Commissioner of Agriculture stated that this division's primary responsibility would be to educate farmers about birds and mammals affecting their interests. Efforts to educate farmers included conducting studies and training sessions which demonstrated how to use different wildlife damage control techniques. This was the early beginnings of what is now the ADC program. While our program has evolved considerably over the years, and we now provide a variety of other types of services and assistance to the public, conducting research and providing training sessions still continues to be an integral part of basic services that we provide.

Examples of some of the assistance that ADC provides includes:

- Providing technical assistance to wildlife management professionals as well as the general public.
- Conducting research and developing new, innovative wildlife damage control methods.
- Providing a source for a variety of control tools used by the wildlife damage management community.
- Developing and transferring scientific and technical information on wildlife damage issues.
- Helping the public obtain migratory bird depredation permits from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), where warranted.
- Providing training sessions on wildlife damage management issues to pest control operators and others on the vertebrate pest management industry.

- Registering and maintaining chemical products, many of which benefit private businesses.

I will talk in more detail about the different types of assistance a little later on, but before I get into that, I would like to give you some very brief background information on the ADC program.

ADC officially began in 1931 with the passage of the Animal Damage Control Act. This authorized ADC to control wildlife to protect agricultural resources, forestry products, and public health and safety. Further legislative authority was provided by the Rural Development, Agriculture, and Related Agencies Appropriated Act of 1988 which authorized ADC, except for urban rodent control, to conduct activities and enter into cooperative agreements to control nuisance animals and birds, and those that are reservoirs of zoonotic diseases.

Initially, ADC was placed under the Department of Agriculture where it stayed from 1931 until 1939. A government reorganization in 1939 placed the program under the Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, where it remained until 1986. At that time, ADC was transferred back to USDA and placed under the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, or APHIS.

The mission of the Animal Damage Control program is to provide Federal leadership in managing problems caused by wildlife. We attempt to accomplish this with about 1,050 Federal employees, along with approximately 270 State or County cooperative employees. Our headquarter offices consist of the Deputy Administrator's office located in Washington, D.C., and the Operational Support Staff located in Riverdale, Maryland, about 12 miles away. We have two regional offices; one located in Lakewood, Colorado, a suburb of Denver; and the other one in Brentwood, Tennessee, a suburb of Nashville. States under the responsibility of the Eastern Regional Office include Minnesota down to Louisiana and everything east of there including Puerto Rico and the

Virgin Islands. States under the Western Regional Office include North Dakota down to Texas, and everything west of there including Alaska, Hawaii, and Guam. Another important part of the ADC program is the Denver Wildlife Research Center which, as you heard yesterday, is in the process of completing and relocating their entire research facilities to the foothills campus of Colorado State University in Fort Collins. Also included within ADC, located in Idaho, is the Pocatello Supply Depot (PSD) which manufactures and sell a variety of toxicants, fumigants, and other products used in wildlife damage management.

ADC assistance to the vertebrate pest control industry first began about 1930 with the establishment of the U.S. Biological Survey Bait Mixing Station in McCammon, Idaho. In 1933, this facility began operation in Pocatello, Idaho and soon after, became known as the PSD. The purpose of the PSD is to manufacture and sell specialized wildlife damage management materials that are not readily available from commercial sources. These products include things such as gas cartridge fumigants used for burrowing rodents or predator control, grain baits for the control of specific birds or rodents, and M-44 products for predator control. In fact, these three items account for 80% of the total sales at the depot. Gas cartridges and grain baits are commonly provided to distribution centers such as Agway or Caldwell Supply, which in turn, provide these products to farm stores and other agricultural outlets. Other products available from the PSD include the electronic guard (a siren and strobe frightening device to scare coyote away from sheep); a variety of animal attractants, gopher probes, and pan tension devices for foothold traps. As the manufacturing entity of ADC, the PSD plays a key role in transforming materials from research into readily available products.

Over the past decade, and particularly since the 1988 revisions of the Federal Insecticide, Rodenticide, and Fungicide Act, ADC has invested an enormous amount of money to maintain and reregister its vertebrate pesticides. Presently, ADC maintains about 35 separate pesticide registrations. Most of these products are needed in such low quantities or at such infrequent intervals that commercial sources have shown little or no interest in providing them because they could not generate a profit. Nearly all of these are considered low volume, minor use vertebrate pesticides. Although these products are considered minor-use and low volume, they are still extremely important in specific cases where damage is occurring and a registered, effective product is needed. The information gathered by Denver Wildlife Research Center and other APHIS personnel to support these registrations is also provided to other State and Federal organizations, or private-sector companies, at no cost, in an effort to help others register their products.

One way I believe that ADC also assists the vertebrate pest management industry is by referring pest control operators (PCOs), nuisance wildlife control operators, and others who deal with wildlife nuisance and damage problems to the homeowners, or farmers and ranchers needing assistance. Many of our State ADC programs maintain a listing of individuals in the private sector who are available for hire, and these people are often referred to the public upon request. This is especially true in

many of our State programs in the Eastern United States where they may only have one or two ADC employees to cover the entire State and, as a result, are often restricted to conducting primarily a technical assistance program. This relationship benefits both of us. ADC benefits because we are able to provide the public with someone to directly resolve the wildlife conflict, and I believe the PCOs and nuisance wildlife control operators receive a direct financial benefit because of our referrals.

Another important service that ADC provides to the public is helping obtain migratory bird depredation permits from the FWS where warranted. In situations where migratory birds are causing damage or creating a nuisance, and lethal control is warranted to resolve the problem or supplement ongoing nonlethal techniques, a migratory bird depredation permit is needed to take the birds. However, the FWS will not issue a depredation permit unless ADC personnel have first determined that it is necessary.

By serving in this capacity, I believe that ADC provides a valuable service allowing many migratory bird depredation conflicts to be resolved, where otherwise a permit might not have been recommended and provided.

But probably, by far, the biggest service that ADC provides to the vertebrate pest management industry is through the development and transfer of scientific and technical information. For example, ADC was a co-sponsor of the Prevention and Control of Wildlife Damage handbook which was recently revised. This handbook is a comprehensive reference of North American vertebrate species and contains control information on over 80 different birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. It also contains information on pesticides, equipment, dealers, etc. In addition to being a co-sponsor of the handbook, ADC personnel helped co-edit, fund, and write a number of the chapters in the handbook. As evidenced by this meeting, ADC is also extremely active presenting papers at conferences such as the Vertebrate Pest Conference, Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Conference, Eastern Wildlife Damage Management Conference, Wildlife Society Meetings, and others. At this conference, ADC employees are giving 15 technical papers, and other ADC employees are serving as chairpersons for many of the sessions.

ADC has also developed a number of fact sheets and informational brochures over the past five years on a variety of subjects dealing with wildlife damage control issues which are made available to the vertebrate pest management industry of other members of the public upon request. This information covers a broad range of topics such as how to deal with urban wildlife problems, fish-eating birds at aquaculture facilities, livestock predation, or wildlife problems at airports. We have an ADC exhibit in the lobby this week that contains most of the informational material that we have produced.

Dick Curnow did a good job yesterday morning giving an overview of the Denver Wildlife Research Center. I would just like to emphasize that DWRC is the only research facility in the world devoted exclusively to the study of wildlife damage control and has been the primary source of effective, nonlethal control methods during the past few years. Examples of some of the products that have been developed or tested through

DWRC recently include the electronic guard, methyl anthranilate, improved break-away snares, and approval from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to use the tranquilizers alpha-chloralose and propiopromazine. As mentioned yesterday, alpha-chloralose is a chemical immobilizing agent that is now being used by ADC, and in some situations, to humanely address urban waterfowl problems. Propiopromazine is also a tranquilizer which was recently approved by FDA for ADC use. This has the greatest potential for use as a tranquilizer tab for foothold traps, but it can be used on almost any type of capture device. The purpose is to reduce or prevent injury to the captured animal. Present research efforts directed towards immunocontraception, habitat management, and new repellents may also soon show promise as new methods available to the vertebrate pest management industry. DWRC also maintains a scientific library of numerous publications and research papers on a number of vertebrate pest issues which is made available to others upon request. Tomorrow afternoon, Diana Dwyer, with DWRC, will present a paper on library research through the internet. I would encourage all of you to attend that presentation, if possible, to get a better understanding of the different types of assistance the library has available, and the many functions that it provides.

Another way that ADC helps transfer technical and scientific information is through training sessions. Last year, ADC personnel conducted approximately 950 training or instructional sessions demonstrating the proper techniques for various wildlife damage control methods. Groups included in these training sessions were County Extension Agents, farmers, ranchers, homeowners, PCOs, nuisance wildlife control operators, and others.

ADC personnel in Indiana also help co-sponsor and host the Purdue Pest Control Conference in Indiana on an annual basis. This is a week-long conference involving pest control operators from across the United States. The purpose of the conference is to promote new ideas and technologies and provide a forum for exchange of information. ADC personnel in that State also help train PCOs and other individuals who are interested in becoming certified applicators in various vertebrate categories. They do this on behalf of the State Chemistry Office in Indiana, which is the State regulatory authority. After becoming a certified applicator, many States require recertification every two or three years, and Indiana ADC

personnel also offer recertification training so certified applicators can maintain their licenses.

In addition, some ADC biologists teach wildlife damage management courses at different colleges or universities including the University of Georgia, Mississippi State University, and the University of Vermont. Since 1981, DWRC has hosted students from the Managing Wildlife and Human Conflicts course in the Department of Fishery and Wildlife Biology at Colorado State University. This course was originally under the title "Vertebrate Pest Management." ADC also helps provide financial support for the wildlife damage management curriculum at Utah State University.

As you might have realized, a lot of the assistance that we provide, and some of the newer methods that have been developed, have been in cooperation with others in the vertebrate pest management industry. A good example of this is the new break-away snares which were recently made available through the DWRC. The initial snare was obtained from a private individual, and DWRC tested and further improved the break-away concept on the snare. Methyl anthranilate, the chemical repellent now available under the brand name "ReJeX-It" is labeled for use in standing water, turf areas, and golf courses as a repellent for geese and other birds. This product was the direct result of a cooperative effort between DWRC and PMC Specialties Group, a private sector company.

These are just a few of the examples of the types of assistance that ADC provides to the vertebrate pest management industry, but I hope that it has given you a broader overview of the many different services that we make available. ADC has been involved in wildlife damage control for a long time but, in my opinion, we have made the most progress developing new methods during the past five years. I think one of the main reasons for this success is because of a cooperative effort between ADC and the vertebrate pest management industry. I think such cooperation is not only important, but critical to the entire vertebrate pest management field. I see such cooperation continuing well into the future as both the range and extent of wildlife damage problems continue to grow.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to be here. Please stop by our exhibit if you have not already, and pick up some of the information that we make available. Thank you.