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Proceedings 10th Great Plains Wildlife Damage Conference
(S.E. Hygnstrom, R.M. Case, and R.J. Johnson, eds.)
Published at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1991.

I would like to echo Vice Chancellor Omtvedt's welcome to Nebraska. We are very pleased that you are holding your conference here in Lincoln.

Nebraska is a major agricultural state. Nebraska ranks first in the nation in number of cattle on feed and fed cattle marketed, second in cash receipts from all livestock marketing, first in production of Great Northern beans, popcorn and alfalfa meal, and third in corn production. Agriculture is important to the state's economy. Some economists project that one-half of Nebraska workers depend on agriculture and the many related industries for their employment. The annual value of agricultural production in Nebraska is more than 8 billion dollars.

Agriculture and wildlife damage problems often go hand-in-hand. We have problems in agricultural situations with native coyotes, prairie dogs, pocket gophers, and ground squirrels, and with the imported starlings, house sparrows, and commensal rodents (Norway rats and house mice). Other animals including several game species cause agricultural damage at times. A variety of animals ranging from snakes and woodpeckers to bats and skunks are nuisances occasionally for homeowners. University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension plays an important educational role in helping Nebraskans handle these problems in an effective, safe and appropriate manner.

We are pleased with the extension wildlife program in Nebraska. We currently have 3 specialist positions supporting this program. Two of these positions focus on wildlife damage management working through the Integrated Pest Management program. The other position encompasses wildlife enhancement activities as well as wildlife damage. Currently, inquiries about wildlife damage account for the majority of requests from the public for wildlife-related information.

Cooperative Extension meets demands for information in a variety of ways. These ways include, of course, responding to letters and phone calls, utilizing newspapers, radio, TV, and other mass media outlets, and conducting public meetings and workshops with various target audiences. In addition, each year specialists conduct one-day inservice training meetings in animal damage control for extension agents. These training meetings help provide information so that many inquiries can be handled by extension offices throughout the state. These and other meetings also provide feedback to the wildlife specialists on current problems and concerns observed by the extension staff in the counties.

In meeting wildlife damage management needs, Cooperative Extension works in close cooperation with other individuals and agencies, particularly the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Animal and

Plant Health Inspection Service-Division of Animal Damage Control (APHIS-ADC) and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC). This cooperation includes coordinating activities and programs, and sharing information and materials. Personnel from APHIS-ADC and the NGPC have regularly assisted with inservice training for extension agents mentioned above. Several academic departments within the University also cooperate to better solve problems and meet needs in Nebraska. For example, wildlife extension work with commensal rodents has regularly involved the Departments of Animal Science and Biological Systems Engineering. In another instance, agronomy, and wildlife personnel are working together on rodent depredation to newly planted grain. In short, extension is a lot of things, but it is a team effort aimed at education, leading and coordinating to achieve common goals.

How are we viewed by the public as a source of information and education? A few years ago, a study was conducted in Nebraska to assess extension's image and program needs. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents that have used extension reported they received appropriate assistance.

A majority of all respondents believed that Extension was the most unbiased source of information among sources included in the survey. These results indicate that Cooperative Extension is viewed as an unbiased source of information where people can obtain appropriate assistance. These points are important when dealing with topics such as wildlife damage that are at times controversial.

Many leaders are suggesting that the 1990s will be the decade of the environment. We will need your expertise to interpret research findings that are economically sound, socially acceptable, and environmentally appropriate for the future.

We are delighted to host the 10th Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop in Lincoln, Nebraska. During the next four days we hope you get better acquainted with each other, share information, develop new ideas, and learn more about Nebraska. Let's make this workshop a team effort in finding ways to solve wildlife damage problems in the most effective, safe, and appropriate ways for now and in the future.