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TRAINING FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL

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ABSTRACT: The training program was started in 1973 for students in Advance Agriculture Occupations classes. Several state and federal agencies were involved in the planning and have since been involved in the training program. The program stresses the practical approach with a variety of field work and related classroom work. Classroom work covers all problems involved in animal damage control. The program is still in the innovative stage, but it seems to be fulfilling a need.

The instructional program for training high school students in animal damage control in Cheyenne, Wyoming, began during the 1973-74 school year. It was the result of a year's planning by school instructors, state and federal agencies, and state and federal personnel.

The need for trained people in animal damage control was established by (1) a survey of government agencies (2) a survey of ranchers needing help in controlling predators and (3) an interest indicated by students wanting a vocation related to wildlife management. The students first choice of wardens working for the game and fish agencies was not realistic because of competition for the openings and the amount of formal education required. So the course was developed to fill the needs of these agriculture occupations students.

The following agencies, institutions and personnel were involved in the initial discussions and planning:

1. Larry Bourrett, Assistant Commissioner of Agriculture (now commissioner), Wyoming Department of Agriculture, 2219 Carey, Cheyenne, WY 82001
2. John Rinehart, Wyoming Game and Fish, 5400 Bishop, Cheyenne, WY 82001
3. Dick Keeney, Wyoming Game and Fish, 5400 Bishop, Cheyenne, WY 82001
4. Joe Vogler, Wyoming Game and Fish, 5400 Bishop, Cheyenne, WY 82001
5. Dale Wade, Specialist, Department of Fishery and Wildlife Biology, Colorado State University (now at University of California, Davis)
6. Wyoming Health Department, Hathaway Building, Cheyenne, WY 82001
7. Extension Service, College of Agriculture, University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY 82071

In the initial planning, it was recommended by the advisory committee to harvest the predators where possible to take advantage of their fur value. It was further recommended to include in the training, the trapping of all fur bearers to help in the income derived by the trainees. It was decided to keep the training very broad to cover all possible predators and animal damage control problems, to include all agencies or organizations having some responsibilities or interest in the subject in the initial planning and/or the training, and that comprehensive training programs would qualify high school students for employment.

The program is designed to give as much practical training to the students as possible. Field trips, field training, visits to local ranches, having students establish trap lines, and clinics on care of pelts and furs are important parts of the total training plan.

The training program was incorporated into the agriculture occupations offering at East High School for students in the advance classes. Because of the wide variety of instruction required, most of the classroom work was set up on individualized instruction. The initial group included eight students.

Classroom training includes: (1) government regulations, laws, legal aspects, game and fish regulations (2) study of all agencies and organizations involved in animal damage control (3) preparing reports (4) predator habits (5) knowledge of pesticides (6) knowledge of furs and pelt care (7) marketing furs (8) identification of losses and causes (9) approved methods of control (10) safety (11) game farms (12) commercial raising of game birds (13) taxidermy.

Textbooks were a problem to find so the department established a resource file including the following type books, magazines and pamphlets:

1. Outdoor Life, Boulder, CO 80302
2. Fur, Fish and Game, A.R. Harding Publishing Company, 2878 E. Main St., Columbus, Ohio 43209
3. Wyoming Wildlife
4. "Wildlife Conservation Employee" Agriculture Cooperative Training, Texas A&M, College Station, Texas 77843
5. Wade, Dale, "Control of Damage by Coyotes" Bulletin 482a, Cooperative Extension Service, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO
6. "Muskrat Control" - Leaflet 436, Agriculture Extension Service, University of Arkansas, Division of Agriculture
7. "Armadillo Control" - Leaflet 466, Agriculture Extension Service, University of Arkansas, Division of Agriculture
8. "Methods Useful in Reducing Blackbird Damage to Rice Fields" - Leaflet 496, Agriculture Extension Service, University of Arkansas, Division of Agriculture
9. "Mole Control" - Leaflet 504, Agriculture Extension Service, University of Arkansas, Division of Agriculture
10. "Controlling Small Fall and Winter Bird Roosts" - Leaflet 522, Agriculture Extension Service, University of Arkansas, Division of Agriculture
11. "Controlling Rats" - L-442, Cooperative Extension Service, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas
12. "Controlling Problem Moles" - L-343, Cooperative Extension Service, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas
13. "Controlling Mice" - L-345, Cooperative Extension Service, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas
14. "Controlling Problem Pocket Gophers" - L-346, Cooperative Extension Service, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas
15. "Controlling Problem Prairie Dogs" - L-350, Cooperative Extension Service, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas
16. "Do You Have a Problem With Birds" - L-352, Cooperative Extension Service, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas
17. "Controlling Problem Bobcats" - L-362, Cooperative Extension Service, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas
18. "Controlling Problem Red Fox" - L-363, Cooperative Extension Service, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas
19. "Controlling Problem Raccoon" - L-364, Cooperative Extension Service, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas
20. Pickens, Homer C, Modern Techniques for Trapping Coyotes and Bobcats, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87108

The vocational agriculture department continues to search for material to add to the resource file.

Resource people from the agencies and institutions are used in the class as each of the areas of instruction occurs during the school year. Their cooperation and knowledge are an essential part of the training.

Field training includes trapping techniques, observing predator habits, and observation of other control methods in use by agencies such as Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Wyoming Health Department. For field work, the students are assigned in pairs to one expert. The programs have recruited volunteers for the field training to work with the students after school or on weekends.

The program is still in the trial stage. Only two students have completed all the training and they did not accept employment in the animal damage control area. Currently, there are three tenth grade students planning to follow the training program.

The vocational agriculture instructors feel the program can continue to fill a need both for students and agriculture. There is now a state-wide inservice program being offered to high school agriculture instructors to train licensed technicians in pesticide application. This will be added to the current program for animal damage control. An employment survey indicated there is a good future for high school students trained in animal damage control.