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OPENING REMARKS

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California Department of Agriculture

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OPENING REMARKS
VERTEBRATE PEST CONTROL CONFERENCE

James W. Koehler, General Chairman and
Chief, Weed and Vertebrate Pest Control
California Department of Agriculture

It is a pleasure for me to welcome all of you to this conference. It is a conference -- not a convention -- and motions or resolutions will not be entertained. We are here to get acquainted with each other and to learn some of the best methods of controlling vertebrate pests and to discuss our problems.

This is the second conference of this nature. The first conference was held over two years ago in Sacramento on February 6 and 7, 1962. The proceedings of that conference are still available from the National Pest Control Association, 250 West Jersey Street, Elizabeth, New Jersey. The proceedings of this conference may be ordered at our registration desk.

The purpose of this Vertebrate Pest Control Conference are several. They are to:

1. Get acquainted with other persons in the field of vertebrate pest control ;
2. Learn the best and safest methods of vertebrate pest control;
3. Hear what is going on in the various fields of research;
4. Stimulate new research;
5. Improve communications between research workers and between research workers, pest control operators and industry developers of materials used in the field of vertebrate pest control;
6. Inform the public about the true role of vertebrate pest control and why it is sometimes necessary, and
7. Attempt to eliminate misunderstandings between those of us who are engaged in vertebrate pest control and the general public.

Again, as was done two years ago, it is necessary to define what we mean by vertebrate pests. To those of us in this field, a vertebrate pest is any native or introduced wild or feral non-human species of vertebrate animal that is currently troublesome locally or over a wide area to one or more persons either by being a general nuisance, a health hazard, or by destroying food or natural resources.

Generally, whether an animal is beneficial or undesirable depends upon ones relationship with it. Most all living things can at times and in some way be beneficial to mankind. Ground squirrels, English sparrows and even the starling can provide us with enjoyment under certain circumstances. So can many other species that at this meeting will be called vertebrate pests.

Sometimes individuals or local populations of birds or mammals seriously compete with man's interests. When this occurs, demands for control are inevitable.

This word control is misunderstood by most people. We who are engaged in vertebrate pest control work are not out to exterminate all members of a species. Our purpose is to reduce the numbers of these animals or birds to tolerable densities only in areas where they are pests. The primary objectives of the official agricultural agencies engaged in the control of injurious vertebrate pests are conservation, crop protection and preservation of the public welfare and our efforts are directed toward these ends. Our responsibility in agricultural pest control carries with it the duty of providing reasonable means of relief from damage caused by depredating birds and injurious pest animals with the least harm to non-offending species.

As the population of this nation continues to grow it will be necessary to reduce the use of highly toxic and hazardous control materials in favor of methods less hazardous. In fact the use of these materials has been reduced in many areas - to be replaced by less successful, time-consuming and more expensive materials.

Millions of dollars worth of damage is caused by injurious and nuisance species of wildlife. Effective methods of managing these pests involved in our economy are essential. We look for increased coordinated research by industry and by public agencies to provide us with methods that are safe, effective and economical. A large gap in the research field would be closed if our educational institutions would recognize the ecological significance and the value of vertebrate pest control and enter this neglected field of science.

It is our hope that this Vertebrate Pest Control Conference and others to come in the future will stimulate new research and accelerate present research in the field of vertebrate pest control.