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The Wildlife Society

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WILDLIFE DAMAGE CONTROL AND THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY
by Thomas M. Franklin*

Wildlife damage control is recognized by The Wildlife Society as an essential and responsible segment of the wildlife profession. At least since 1959, Society committees have addressed elements of wildlife damage control (although wildlife damage control was not always the specific term used).

The Wildlife Society Council first approved an "Animal Damage Control" position statement in 1968. In March 1985, Council updated and renamed it "Wildlife Damage Control" to emphasize our positive approach to this important segment of wildlife management. The official position statement was published in The Wildlifer (May-June 1985) and is reprinted below.

"WILDLIFE DAMAGE CONTROL"

Wildlife sometimes causes significant damage to private and public property, other wildlife, their habitats, agricultural crops and livestock, forest and pastures, urban and rural structures, and they may threaten human health and safety or be a nuisance. Prevention or control of wildlife damage, which often includes removal of the animals responsible for the damage, is an essential and responsible part of wildlife management. Before wildlife damage control programs are undertaken, careful assessment should be made of the problem, with assurance that the techniques to be used will be effective and biologically appropriate.

The policy of The Wildlife Society in regard to wildlife damage control and the alleviation of wildlife problems is to:

1. Support those wildlife damage prevention and/or control programs that are biologically, environmentally, and economically valid, effective and practical.

2. Encourage research to improve the methods of: (a) preventing and controlling wildlife damage, including

- health hazards and nuisance problems; (b) delineating the effectiveness and environmental impact of damage control programs; (c) assessing the damage caused by wildlife; and (d) assessing the alternatives available to land-owners/managers for wildlife damage prevention and/or control.

3. Recommend wildlife damage control programs that are cost-effective with benefits outweighing the risk that might be encountered in preventing, reducing, or eliminating the damage problem.

4. Support the use of efficient, safe, and economical methods of controlling depredating animals.

5. Encourage and support educational programs in wildlife damage prevention and control.

6. Support biologically sound laws and regulations governing wildlife damage prevention and control directed at individual animals and/or populations.

7. Examine and consider the impact on all wildlife resources when land-owners/managers do not have effective control measures and resort to the elimination of wildlife habitat to reduce serious depredation, or threats to human and domestic animal health and safety.

This position statement was approved in response to a recommendation from the Society's Vertebrate Pest Committee (recently renamed the Wildlife Damage Control Committee). This Committee also submitted several other recommendations to The Wildlife Society Council in an effort to improve the Society's attractiveness to professionals working in wildlife damage control.

In response, Council adopted a series of statements to accomplish this end. Highlights include:

1. Wildlife damage control articles for the Journal and Bulletin are encouraged.

2. Wildlife damage control papers dealing with research and management that are submitted for consideration

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in TWS publications will be judged on the same merits/acceptance standards as all other wildlife papers.

3. Wildlife Damage Control should be the common title used by the Society. Flexibility should be retained to accommodate existing programs and job titles.

4. All Society position statements, both current and future, will be reviewed to ensure wildlife damage control is addressed, when necessary, and that wording conveys a positive attitude by the Society toward wildlife damage control.

5. Professional wildlife damage control education and experience will be given the same credit as all other wildlife disciplines during certification review.

6. Inclusion of wildlife damage control in college level course work is encouraged.

7. TWS will encourage the development of training materials and promote the use of existing training materials and/or programs in wildlife damage control, including information for professionals with limited or no training in wildlife damage control.

8. TWS will encourage and promote continuing education programs in wildlife damage control for wildlife professionals.

9. When a TWS continuing education program is established, credit for wildlife damage control training will be the same as for other wildlife disciplines.

10. TWS will encourage short courses, workshops, etc., on wildlife damage control.

11. It is Council's intention to maintain a committee to address issues relating to wildlife damage control.

12. The President will consider ap-

pointments of at least one member who is familiar with wildlife damage control to appropriate committees.

13. The Wildlife Society Code of Ethics and Standards for Professional Conduct apply to all wildlife professionals.

The Wildlife Society is aggressively seeking to encourage active involvement of wildlife damage control professionals in the mainstream of our present and future activities. We welcome your continued and increasing participation in advancing the Society's efforts to improve wildlife management through professionalism.

On a related subject, the Society recently has commented on an administrative effort to transfer the federal animal damage control program from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture. We have urged the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture to agree to retain the program within Interior.

Although we recognize that not all Society members agree with this position, and that the Fish and Wildlife Service should make a greater commitment to the existing program, we are not aware of a compelling reason for the transfer.

The department of Agriculture must develop a well thought out proposal with public input that ensures the establishment of an ecologically and economically sound wildlife damage control program before a transfer should be endorsed.

Until this happens, we will work with the Fish and Wildlife Service and Congress to promote the appropriation of sufficient funding and allocation of professional resources to address future federal wildlife damage control needs.