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The NADCA Probe, Issue 233

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The Wildlife Control Industry

By Kevin Clark, CEO/Founder, Critter Control, Inc.

(Submitted by Mike Dwyer)

Modern Wildlife Damage Control

Within the larger pest control industry there are several specialized types of pest management that have developed. Wildlife control is a highly specialized form of pest control that concentrates on wildlife pests and is considered as its own category, that of 'vertebrate control.' Services include control of commensal rodents, trapping of larger vertebrate pests, and damage prevention and structural repairs related to wildlife damage (note - we are not 'trappers').

A Multitude of Interested/Related Parties

Commercial wildlife control is at the interface of a large number of interested parties:

- (a) Traditional pest control companies deal primarily with insects and some rodents. Most do not have the tools, equipment, time or knowledge to deal with larger vertebrate pests.
- (b) There are tens of thousands of individual recreational fur trappers around the country. They do not usually have the licenses, permits and insurances necessary to provide full service commercial wildlife control to the general public, yet many states require commercial wildlife control operators nonetheless to hold an 'unrelated' trappers permit/license.
- (c) Municipal animal control officers primarily deal with dogs and cats and they are generally available only Monday through Friday, from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.
- (d) Government wildlife damage control consists primarily of addressing agricultural related complaints (crop damage and depredation).
- (e) Humane societies and animal shelters are usually staffed with volunteers who are often not fully trained or funded to handle the volume of wildlife conflicts that arise.

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Message From the President

Art Smith, President, NADCA

In the minutes of our annual meeting in Visalia, CA, printed in the last issue of **THE PROBE**, there is mention of an idea we would use to increase the membership of NADCA and another to increase the diversity of articles appearing in each issue of **THE PROBE**. I am very happy to report that this issue reflects the initiation of both of these ideas.

At our annual meeting, we found that many wildlife professionals have not heard of NADCA, and those that have usually somehow heard about us by word of mouth. This probably should not come as a surprise; outside of our regular membership we have not put much emphasis on advertising NADCA or **THE PROBE**. So to get **THE PROBE** into the homes and workplaces of some of the wildlife professional who are not NADCA members, everyone who attended the Hot Springs, AR 2003 Wildlife Damage Conference and the Visalia, CA 2004 Vertebrate Pest Conference will be receiving 2 issues free.

Yes, this is not a new idea — many commercial publishers use this same tact. Give people a freebie and maybe some of them will buy your product. That is exactly what we are hoping to do. When we discussed this in Visalia, during the presentation of this idea, Mike Dwyer started laughing. At first I was a little unprepared for Mike's reaction, but after asking why the jocularity, he said simply "I love this idea, this is great."

But we have another topic to deal with, and that is content of **THE PROBE**. This publication is unarguably the single most constant product of NADCA. If our product is not interesting to new (and current) members, we will not make any significant gains in anything no matter who and how many people get free issues.

NADCA is, without question, the most diverse group representing wildlife professionals. We can count researchers, commercial operators, agency wildlife managers, animal welfare interests, extension specialists, and many other categories of professionals among our membership. This is a wider array of interests than NWCOA, TWS WDM Working Group, HSUS, or any other hu-

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Ever Wonder?

How many times can a skunk "fire" their defensive secretion before they have to "reload?"

Skunks can "fire" 5 or 6 "shots" of scent and then require about 2 days to "reload" (refill their scent glands). Because of the time required to "reload", skunks are reluctant to expend all their "ammunition." This is why skunks have such bold black and white coloring: to ensure that so far as predators are concerned, they are as visible and as memorable as possible. Where practical, it is to a skunk's advantage to simply warn a threatening creature off without expending scent: the black and white warning color aside, threatened skunks will go through an elaborate routine of hisses and foot stamping and tail-high threat postures before expelling a shower of scent.

Source — Wikimedia at <http://www.campusprogram.com/reference/en/wikipedia/s/sk/skunk.html>



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Your contributions to *The Probe* are welcome and encouraged. The deadline for submitting materials is the 15th of the month prior to publication. Opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of NADCA.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

September 13-16, 2004 - Bird Strike Committee - USA/Canada Meeting, Hyatt Regency, Baltimore, MD. See www.birdstrike.org or contact Richard Dolbeer, USDA Wildlife Services, 419-625-8465, e-mail: Richard.a.dolbeer@aphis.usda.gov.

September 18-22, 2004 -11th Annual Conference, The Wildlife Society, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Go to www.wildlife.org or phone 301-897-9770.

September 26-29, 2004 - Annual meeting, The Society for Vector Ecology, Double Tree Guest Suites, Boston, MA. Information at www.sove.org

October 18-22, 2004 - Second National Rodent Summit, Ft. Collins, CO. Hosted by USDA/APHIS National Wildlife Research Center. For information contact John Eisemann at John.D.Eisemann@aphis.usda.gov, phone (970) 266-6158

November 14-17, 2004 - Defenders of Wildlife, Carnivores 2004: Expanding Partnerships in Carnivore Conservation, Santa Fe, NM. Go to www.carnivoreconference.org.

May 17-19, 2005 - 11th Wildlife Damage Management Conference, Holiday Inn West Bay, Traverse City, Michigan. Organized by the Wildlife Damage Management Working Group of The Wildlife Society. For additional information, contact Kathleen Fagerstone at Kathleen.A.Fagerstone@aphis.usda.gov or visit the web site, <http://wildlifedamagegroup.unl.edu>.

New Product Available

Developed by mole control expert, Tom Schmidt "The Mole Man", "The Little Woodie" also known as "The Tunnel Choke" removes the need for the mole trapper of having to build the dirt mound speed bump when setting the Victor® Out O'Sight® Mole Trap. The Woodie slides conveniently over the trigger pan for easy installation. "The Little Woodie" is also effective for those situations where dry, sandy or mulchy soil doesn't pack well enough for a speed bump.

Each Woodie (also known as a "Tunnel Choke" is made of Redwood and tempered copper for years of service. To learn more about the product, download a free instructional guide from <http://www.wildlifedamagecontrol.com/moles/woody.htm> Woodies are available from Wildlife Damage Control 340 Cooley St. Springfield, MA 01128

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Letter from the President

man/wildlife conflict group can ever hope to attain. But if our product cannot reflect our diversity, any gains we make with new members will surely be short-lived. Again, enter Mike Dwyer.

I have asked Mike to write an article about his corner of the wildlife damage world, the commercial operations side of things. I asked Mike because he and I have always shared our ideas with each other, we share very common visions about NADCA, and to be honest, he also said he'd be more than happy writing something up. Hey, the guy offered, what was I supposed to do?? I am kidding. If he had not offered, he would have been one of the first people I'd have called. I am looking forward to seeing what he's come up with.

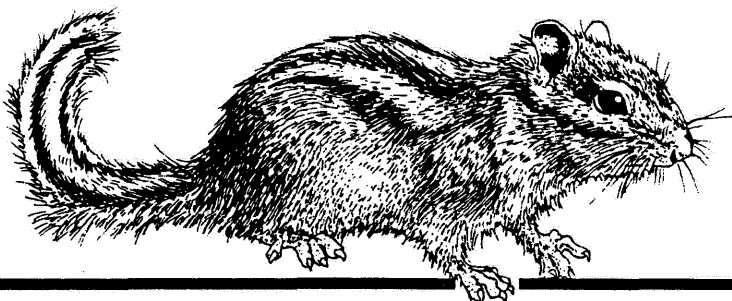
Next issue, a different NADCA Officer will write about a different aspect in the wildlife damage field. Perhaps it will be on new advances in research or extension work, or maybe the latest happenings in the agency management arena. The officer does not need to write the piece — they will be more than welcome to do so — but if they choose not to write, they will need to find someone who will. The result will be different articles in each issue discussing different aspects within the human/wildlife conflict world.

Both new members and diversity are very important to NADCA and **THE PROBE** exists as our primary communication tool. Hopefully with the continued (and emphasized) diversity and opportunities to non-members to join, NADCA will grow.

I am not immune to contributing either. In fact, I already have the next issue's article started. And if you have something you'd like to present, call or email me (605.773.7595 art.smith@state.sd.us), or just simply send your submission directly to our Editor, Larry Sullivan.

I am excited at the prospects these changes may have on NADCA. I hope you are too. Thank you for your time.

Art



Book Review

Rex E. Marsh, Certified Wildlife Biologist,
University of California, Davis

Living with Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest is the title of a new book by Russell Link, an urban wildlife biologist with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. This book is written primarily for people seeking solutions to human/wildlife conflicts; however, it encompasses much more than that, as it also promotes a tolerance for wildlife. Tips are provided for safe viewing of specific wildlife and information is included on how to favorably maintain or enhance the habitat for certain animals. To integrate these diverging interests into one comprehensive volume is not an easy task, but Russell Link has accomplished his goal and produced a most informative book.

The book consists of four parts. Part 1 has 26 chapters on mammals, including beaver, bears, elk, moose, mountain beaver, porcupine, river otters, and wolves, as well as all other mammals of the Pacific Northwest (Oregon, Washington and British Columbia). The 14-chapter bird section makes up Part 2 and includes birds ranging from Canada geese to woodpeckers. Part 3 covers the reptiles and amphibians in 4 chapters. Part 4 consists of eleven Appendices and a subject index.

The intended users of this book are home or property owners, property managers and others concerned with wildlife in one way or another. The volume includes all the usual biological information: feeding behaviors, dens and nesting sites, reproduction, habitats, ranges, etc. Signs of the animal include tracks, nests, droppings, calls, etc. How to resolve conflicts through habitat modification, fencing, exclusion, and repellents are stressed, although information on trapping, shooting, fumigants, and poisons are given when appropriate. Diseases, public health concerns, and legal status are provided.

The book has numerous sidebars with attention getting titles such as *Tips on Driving in Deer Country*, *Of Mice in Vehicles*, *Collecting Antlers*, *Releasing Unwanted Pet Rabbits*, *Dive Bombing Crows and Other Bird Attacks*, and many others that contribute significantly to making the volume so unique and interesting. Sidebars on how to avoid encounters with animals such as bears, cougars, elk, and moose can be found, as well as additional sidebars on what to do in case attacked.

The volume is exceedingly well written and illustrated with black and white line drawings of animals as well as helpful how-to drawings. This 8-1/2 x 11 inch, 392-page soft cover volume will be a welcome addition to a reference book collection on human/wildlife conflicts, even if you do not live in the Pacific Northwest.

Published by the University of Washington Press, Seattle in association with the Washington Department of Fish and Game. Priced at \$26.95. The book can be ordered directly from the University of Washington Press, www.washington.edu/uwpress or from www.amazon.com

Wildlife Control Industry

(f) Animal welfare interests espouse 'idealistic' solutions, versus the 'realistic' solutions needed to cost-effectively and humanely deal with the situations encountered on a daily basis.

Wildlife Damage Control Surveys

In seeking to better define the subset of society that our industry serves, Critter Control initiated several consumer surveys. The results of these surveys will hopefully provide valuable information for maintaining and improving quality of service.

Hundreds of Critter Control customers were surveyed on their views and experiences with nuisance wildlife. Most of the survey respondents had problems with raccoons, squirrels, skunks, woodchucks and moles. We expect these survey results to be representative of the views held by customers of all commercial wildlife control operators.

A majority of the customers approved of the lethal control of rats/mice, moles, snakes, bats, pigeons, and skunks. Most disapproved of the lethal control of deer, geese, woodpeckers, squirrels, and raccoons.

Eighty-eight percent of the respondents described the humane treatment of nuisance animals as either "very" or "moderately" important to them. Most (60.3%) of the respondents lived in suburban situations, while the least (13.5%) lived in rural areas. The remainder (26.2%) were city, or urban, residents.

Overall, 24.8% of the respondents had already attempted to control the nuisance problems on their own. Of these, 26.3% attempted to repel the animals, 25.8% tried to live-trap, 20.7% used poisons, and 16.4% attempted lethal traps. Only 16.7% tried to exclude the problem animal, a major factor in permanently solving wildlife damage problems.

Thirty-two percent of the survey respondents were currently using a pest control service in some capacity. Another 22% had contracted such services in the past. Most respondents (73.2%) approved of limited pesticide use by professionals. Few (3.6%) disapproved of any pesticide use. Fifty-two percent of the customers indicated they would like to see more natural or biological control methods. A majority of the customers (76.4%) use pesticides (such as insecticides, rodenticides, and herbicides) themselves.

Most of our survey respondents approved of the lethal control of rats/mice (95.2%), moles (78.5%), snakes (74.3%), bats (71.2%), pigeons (59.9%), and skunks (56.5%). Most respondents disapproved of the lethal control

of deer (69.8%), geese (66.7%), woodpeckers (65.2%), squirrels (58.0%), and raccoons (55.1%). The survey respondents split fairly evenly on approval/disapproval of the lethal control of woodchucks and opossum (52.2% disapproval).

Forty four percent stated that humaneness (defined as the reduction of pain felt by the animal) was "very important" to them and that they would be willing to pay additional costs to insure a humane approach for control.

When asked to identify preferred options for handling a nuisance complaint, the most commonly selected approaches were euthanasia of sick animals (24.5%), relocation (24.5%), lethal traps (21.3%), and rodent extermination (18.9%). Few respondents picked live-trap then euthanize (6.9%). Even fewer chose live-trap then release on-site (3.5%) as the preferred option, showing a total lack of understanding of the more cost-effective, humane and ecologically responsible wildlife management applications. This further illustrates the need for public education on the part of wildlife control operators and public agency resource managers.

Management Implications of Survey Results

Humane treatment of nuisance animals was important to most of the survey respondents. For the purpose of our survey, we specifically defined humaneness as the reduction of pain felt by the animal. Different people, however, tend to have different interpretations of what constitutes humaneness. Responding daily to numerous individuals from a wide range of often strongly held beliefs about animals is a major challenge for the field technician. An approach, which pleases one customer, may very well anger the next. Communication and customer service become at least as important as the technical expertise involved.

Another consideration for wildlife control operators is the exposure to liability that each of these options present. Liability concerns should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The wrong decision can lead to tremendous negative publicity, customer ill will, lawsuits, fines, penalties, revocation of licenses/permits, or other regulatory actions.

Status of Wildlife Control in the United States

Over the last two decades there has developed an interest in the development of standards and/or recommendations to guide the growing nuisance wildlife damage control industry.

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The editor of *THE PROBE* thanks contributors to this issue: Kevin Clark, Mike Dwyer, Rex Marsh, and Art Smith

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try. A few years ago, in an attempt to assess this growing profession, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies developed a survey to address the level of state agencies' oversight of wildlife control operators. It was hoped that the results of the survey would help define the needs of state and federal agencies and private wildlife control operators so that they may be better met in the future.

State's Status

Although now somewhat dated, the survey found that 37 states (77%) perform some nuisance wildlife control activities as part of their regulatory duties. The agency most frequently specified was the state division of fish and wildlife (52.8%). Other agencies mentioned were the state department of agriculture (17%); the state department of natural resources (9.4%); APHIS/WS (7.6%); county agents (7.5%); and state department of health (3.8%). Of interest will be whether there will be a trend to privatize this work as state budgets become more limited.

Most states perform these tasks; nearly all states (94%) also allow property owners to euthanize some species of wildlife, while 69% allow property owners to relocate wildlife as an alternative. Designated private agents are allowed to euthanize nuisance animals for property owners in 39 states, and 32 states allow such agents to relocate nuisance wildlife. There was interest as to whether disease and other concerns will reduce the number of states that allow relocation in the future. The states estimate that 41.3% of wildlife control operators are part-time, and 43.7% are full-time (25% are combined with an existing pest control operation).

Many states have a prerequisite for a fur-trapper education course to obtain a permit, which is almost totally unrelated to the needs of commercial wildlife control. Many of the regulations on the books today were written long ago and have not been updated to meet this new and growing industry.

Another area of frustration for many wildlife control operators is the inability to obtain permits to handle certain species of game animals (such as deer, bear and beaver) and migratory birds (such as ducks and geese) for which they frequently get requests to control. While some states (particularly those with tight budgets) help wildlife control operators to obtain the proper permits, neighboring states seem to have little interest or ability to do the same. Cooperation varies as well between USFWS Regions.

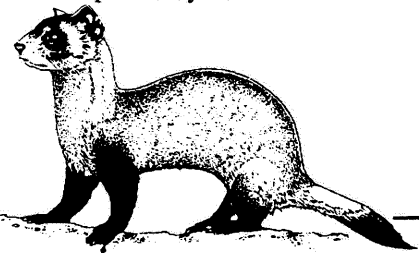
Licensing of Wildlife Control Operators

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has developed a draft of 'wildlife control operator standards' (licensing/regulations) that it hopes to enact through various state legislative bodies to address their membership concerns related to the growing wildlife control industry. In response, the National Wildlife Control Operators Association as developed their own draft standards in an attempt to have the private sector influence pending legislation and wildlife regulations.

Regardless of point of view, state regulators and fish and game agencies need to take a look at what is available out there and implement new regulations to replace the antiquated ones that are on the books in most states.

Conclusion

Commercial wildlife control operators are at the interface of a multitude of interested parties when it comes to urban wildlife management, and all the parties should agree that the industry has evolved and needs some direction as well as modern, more relevant regulations. The main areas of concern are humane animal handling, operator testing and licensing (permits), liability insurance requirements, chemical immobilization/euthanasia, competition from governmental agencies, and an increased opportunity to assist government agencies by handling species, which are currently excluded from permit system.



Correction

The NADCA Directory sent with the March/April issue of **THE PROBE** erroneously listed Mike Dwyer and Lynn Braband as Directors for the Great Lakes Region.

MIKE DWYER IS DIRECTOR, GREAT LAKES REGION

LYNN BRABAND IS DIRECTOR, NORTH-EAST REGION

*My apologies,
Larry Sullivan*

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Membership Renewal and Application Form

NATIONAL ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL ASSOCIATION

Mail to: Nicki Frey, FRWS, Utah State University, Logan, UT 84322-5230

Name: _____ Phone: (____) ____ - ____ Home

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Additional Address Info: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP _____

Please use 9-digit Zip Code

Dues: \$ _____ Donation: \$ _____ Total: \$ _____ Date: _____

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| <input type="checkbox"/> USDA - Extension Service | <input type="checkbox"/> ADC Equipment/Supplies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Federal - not APHIS or Extension | <input type="checkbox"/> State Agency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign | <input type="checkbox"/> Trapper |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe) _____ | |