



APHIS Wildlife Services Update

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Wildlife Disease Program – Wildlife Services (WS) has been partnering with state wildlife agencies and Veterinary Services to conduct comprehensive feral swine disease surveillance on approximately 2,500 feral swine in 30 states annually. Diseases of most interest and concern include: swine brucellosis, pseudorabies, and classical swine fever. In states represented by MAFWA, WS has collected approximately 200 feral swine samples this fiscal year from 10 (CO, IL, IA, KS, OH, MI, MO, NE, ND, and WI) of the 14 Midwestern states.

Surveillance for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) continues as another area of emphasis for WS. Biological year 2009 (April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2010) represented the fourth year of surveillance coordinated at a national, flyway, and state level. This biological year is on track to meet its surveillance goals with over 650 samples collected in the 14 Midwestern states. While the national surveillance effort has not detected any HPAI in the United States during the 4 years of surveillance, additional benefits are being gained by identifying other infectious pathogens and increasing knowledge and information regarding the risk of low pathogenic avian influenza. Due to a proposal to significantly reduce the budget, WS will likely have to discontinue all cooperative agreements with state wildlife agencies. This discontinuation will occur during the next fiscal year when WS would typically renew the agreements. In addition, WS will follow the same approach by discontinuing all apparently, healthy wild bird surveillance and move toward a morbidity/mortality only surveillance system. States experiencing wild bird die-offs can still collect and submit samples, and WS will cover HPAI diagnostic expenses.

Some State Highlights

Colorado – WS worked with the Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW) in addressing urban coyote problems in the Denver Metro Area. WS developed an agreement with the Northeast Region of DOW to provide assistance in removing coyotes that they determined are a threat to human health and safety. WS assisted with five coyote attack incidents in the past year and consulted with the DOW on several other aggressive coyote incidents. As in previous years, WS also works with the DOW in the three remaining Regions in addressing mountain lion and black bear depredation incidents. Also in 2009, WS worked with the DOW on a feral hog control project in SE Colorado

Illinois – The WS program in Illinois has collaborated with the IL Department of Natural Resources to develop a Canada goose charity harvest pilot program in 2010. The program is modeled after successful programs in other states to manage overabundant populations of resident Canada geese in urban areas. Geese will be processed at a facility licensed by the Illinois Department of Agriculture and the goose meat products will be provided to charitable organizations for human consumption. If the program is successful, WS expects it to become fully operational in 2011.



Indiana – WS in collaboration with the Indiana Board of Animal Health, Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Indiana Department of Agriculture, and Veterinary Services continues to assist with Bovine Tuberculosis management. WS has assisted in the depopulation of three captive cervid facilities in the State, as well as surveillance of wild deer. In cooperation with the USFWS, an Emergency Response Plan for White-nose Syndrome (WNS) in bats is being developed by WS. Additionally, WS is working with the IDNR to develop a WNS Contingency Plan, specific to Indiana.

Kansas – WS continues to work with Kansas Wildlife and Parks (KDWP), the USFWS and The Nature Conservancy to manage prairie dogs around two black footed ferret (BFF) release sites in Logan County. WS role is viewed as an important one offering prairie dog management to neighboring land owners that do not wish to be impacted by dispersing prairie dogs from BFF relocation sites. WS again has partnered with KDWP to monitor for avian influenza. Both agencies take part in hunter harvest surveys to help determine if wild birds are carrying the disease. WS continues to cooperate with KDWP through its cooperative agreement with the Kansas Animal Health Department for feral swine management. WS works with several Wildlife Area Managers and conducts operational control on these public lands to control feral swine.

Kentucky – WS has been cooperating with Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KYDFWR) to provide assistance to private landowners in trapping and removing feral hogs. These efforts are both responding to the need for damage control of these animals and providing opportunities to better document hog distribution and sample collection for disease testing. Additionally, WS recently met with KYDFWR and USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service personnel to discuss possibilities of establishing a cost share program in which private landowners cooperate with all three agencies to purchase feral hog traps, receive guidance in using these traps and receive partial reimbursement for their expenses. WS has also secured a helicopter contractor that will supply services to conduct feral hog management. This project is expected to be launched this winter in parts of KY to evaluate the practicality and effectiveness of aerial hog control in the area.

Michigan – WS is in the midst of the 7th year of Double-crested Cormorant management to protect natural resources, principally sport fish. This is in partnership with MI Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) and the tribes. There are indications that in some locations, fisheries are experiencing a rebound for which DCCO management is at least partially a factor. WS is finalizing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to accommodate an expanded Double-crested Cormorant management plan developed by DNRE. This year WS has expanded significantly the removal of mute swans from important wildlife areas for the protection of native wildlife including trumpeter swans, at the request of DNRE. This year over 600 mute swans were removed from 10 wildlife areas. Additionally, WS continues to assist DNRE with wolf predation issues and collaborates with multiple State agencies on Bovine Tuberculosis eradication efforts in the Northern Lower Peninsula.



Minnesota – In MN, the wolf de-listing issue has been a very hot topic this year and WS has been busy responding to wolf complaints in 2010. Last year's (2009) total and verified wolf complaints was the second highest on record in MN, however, we are on track to exceed last year's near-record complaint levels this year. As of early June WS had received 111 wolf complaints, 49 which were verified as wolves killing or wounding domestic animals. Five of the 49 verified complaints were related to domestic dogs being killed or wounded by wolves with the remaining 44 verified cases of damage related to livestock (primarily cattle). In May alone WS verified 33 wolf depredation complaints. Through early June of this year, 77 wolves had been taken by Wildlife Service's personnel, 76 of those were in response to depredations on domestic animals.

Also, a recent change in state legislation will now allow sheriffs or law enforcement officers to verify wolf damage complaints. Historically, only conservation officers and WS personnel were able to document and ultimately verify damage as wolf-related given other types of predation that can occur e.g. coyote, bear, etc. WS is not sure what impact this will have but is concerned that because some law enforcement officers are elected officials there may be a tendency for them to "rubber stamp" depredations as wolf related to appease their constituency, without having the types of evidence that has been normally required to verify damage. With a lower burden of proof to initiate trapping activities and to verify a damage claim, WS could see an increase in complaints that we are required to trap and an increase in the amount of compensation that the state pays out for verified wolf damage. The ability of WS to respond to higher level of complaints than we are already experiencing could be problematic given the current level of funding we now receive.

WS is assisting the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in disease management efforts by removing deer within and near the Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) core area. In February and March, WS has taken and sampled approximately 260 deer from the bTB core and nearby areas. Two hundred fifty-four of these deer have been released to the public for human consumption.

Missouri/Iowa – In downtown Kansas City wild turkeys were threatening airplane/passenger safety at the Kansas City Downtown Airport. Instead of using lethal removal, WS coordinated with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) to trap and relocate about 30 wild turkeys from airport property. This resulted in the immediate removal of the threat and the turkeys being relocated to areas where turkey numbers are not as high.

WS biologists coordinated with MDC fisheries biologists to stock the Kansas City International Airport (KCI) 64 acre lake with Flathead Catfish. These are predatory catfish which should "clean out" a good portion of the small trash fish in the lake that attract herons, vultures, and gulls when the dissolved oxygen gets low and the small fish come to the surface. MDC fisheries and WS biologists used electro-shocking to collect 750 flatheads from the Missouri river and relocated them into the lake. This project benefits all natural resources involved, and reduce threats to aviation safety.



KCI's managed archery hunt continues to be successful, with about 20 hunters removing 99 deer from airport property from Sept 09-Jan 10 at a cost of \$0 to the airport. WS worked with the MDC urban wildlife biologist to establish the managed urban archery hunt. KCI has seen a reduction in deer incidents since the implementation of this program. Sharpshooting used to cost the airport about \$10,000 for 50 deer. That money is now used for other wildlife issues such as raptor trapping and relocation.

Nebraska – WS worked with NE Game and Parks personnel using aerial operations to remove 15 feral swine from Harlan County. Samples for disease monitoring were collected from the animals. In relation to detection of TB in a captive elk herd in Knox County, WS assisted NE Game and Parks in removing and sampling 40 white-tail deer from around the infected area.

North Dakota – Collaboration with ND Game and Fish Department (NDGFD) continues on avian influenza surveillance. Similar to previous years, both agencies met the annual sampling goals that were established in the national surveillance protocol. Mountain lion populations appear to be expanding in the state and WS continues to assist with investigations of depredation to livestock. Double-crested cormorant populations are increasing in the state and they continue to impact sport fishery resources. For the past three years WS has helped the NDGFD acquire a depredation permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The permit allows a limited lethal take of cormorants as part of an integrated damage management program that also includes harassment and alterations of fish stocking dates. Since 2002 WS has assisted with the management of damage from resident geese; the NDGFD provides funding and WS hires two seasonal employees who distribute harassment devices and provide recommendations on the issuance depredation permits.

Ohio - State funding for the Ohio Department of Agriculture's Indemnity Program was eliminated this year. This reduced Ohio's WS Livestock Protection Program by 50%. Current funding supports a half-time position for direct assistance to livestock producers on predation issues. Reports of coyote and black vulture predation issues continue to rise. Cooperators are reporting increase interactions with coyotes in urban areas.

With the establishment of Ohio's new WS Disease Biologist, more dedication has been spent on obtaining feral swine samples for the National Disease Surveillance program. This has apparently helped increase the publicity and awareness of feral swine in Ohio. More sightings are being reported to WS state office. A blanket collection permit from Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry has been obtained to allow WS access to all State Forest for the collection of feral swine for disease sampling.

South Dakota - WS meets monthly with SD Game & Fish (SDGF) Regional Wildlife Managers to discuss wildlife damage in the state. Coyotes, Canada geese and aerial operations receive the most attention. WS participated in an ADC Policy Review Committee Meeting which included the Governors office, Secretaries from SDGF and the



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Department of Agriculture, Sheep Growers, County Commissions, Ag Unity, Wildlife Federation, Farm Bureau and the Sheep Specialist from South Dakota State University. WS has hired two aerial gunners with one position performing a combination of both aerial and ground operations. This arrangement has worked well for cooperator and both agencies.

Wisconsin – The WI WS program has partnered with the National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bad River Tribe, and the WI Department of Natural Resources to help protect and preserve Wisconsin's small population of endangered Piping plovers on the Apostle Islands in Lake Superior. Wildlife Services has removed a small number of coyotes and raccoons from the plover nesting area to increase the survivability of eggs, chicks, and adults. Operational success will not be known until all chicks have fledged.

Over the last several years there has been an increase in confirmed cougar observations. This is especially interesting since, cougars were extirpated from Wisconsin in the early 1900's. There was a huge surprise to many when Wisconsin had a confirmed livestock attack by a cougar this spring. Over the last several months, a cougar has been confirmed in killing or injuring several types of livestock, including horses, cattle, and sheep in south central Wisconsin. Several local residents have seen the animal. Wildlife Services has partnered with the WI DNR to locate the animal and will attempt to capture it if possible. The project has been ongoing for nearly a month with a high level of public interest and sporadic cougar activity.

The National Park Service has requested Wildlife Services to help protect Canada yew from over browsing by white-tailed deer on two islands within the Apostle Islands archipelago. More than 100 deer have been lethally removed since the project began last fall. (York Island is less than one square mile in size and Sand Island is approximately five square miles in size.) Nearly all the deer have been provided to the Red Cliff Tribe for consumption. The project is expected to be completed during the winter of 2010 - 2011. Vegetative studies are being conducted by the NPS to measure long term success.



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