

March 21, 2025

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chair, Committee on Appropriations United  
States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member, Committee on  
Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Andy Harris  
Chair, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural  
Development, Food & Drug  
Administration & Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sanford Bishop, Jr.  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture,  
Rural Development, Food & Drug Administration,  
& Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chair Harris, & Ranking Member Bishop:

Wildlife causes more than \$12.8 billion in damage each year to natural resources, public infrastructures, private property, and agriculture. USDA Wildlife Services (WS) works to prevent, minimize, or manage this damage and to protect human health & safety from conflicts with wildlife. Wildlife damage to U.S. livestock, aquaculture, small grains, fruits, vegetables, and other agricultural products has been estimated to reach nearly \$1 billion annually. Wildlife predators cause more than \$232 million in death loss to livestock; field crop losses due to wildlife total \$619 million annually; losses to vegetables, fruits, and nuts total \$146 million annually; and 70% of catfish farmers incur wildlife-related damage. The annual industry-wide value of lost catfish sales revenue to cormorants averages \$47.2 million, ranging from \$25.8 million to \$65.4 million, depending upon predation levels in any given year. As a result, WS is an essential program to U.S. agriculture.

WS assists farmers and ranchers in 50 states and 3 territories to reduce the impact of predators on their animals, protecting 8.9 million head of cattle, 5.1 million head of sheep, and 56 million head of other livestock in 334,000 direct control actions. In FY23, WS provided more than 20,800 technical assistance activities that enabled 6,061 livestock producers to implement improved husbandry and methods such as use of guard animals, exclusion, fencing, and predator dispersal. These activities included 53 predator management workshops attended by more than 2,700 individuals from 14 states, dispersal of 277,335 double-crested cormorants, and removal of 2,521 cormorants at aquaculture facilities in 15 states to protect farmed fish from avian depredation. The industry is worth \$1.5 billion nationally (per National Marine Fisheries Service).

WS supported USDA's Animal Plant Health Inspection Services' emergency response efforts to animal diseases, natural disasters, and hazardous spills. In FY23, WS deployed 102 personnel on 172 deployments for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) and African Swine Fever (ASF). WS personnel have physically deployed to assist 12 states in response to HPAI. WS responded to the ASF detection on the island of Hispaniola and since detection in July 2021, have removed a total of 4,921 feral swine and have sampled 3,042 for ASF on Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands through FY23. The National Wildlife Disease Program (NWD) also coordinated sample collection and evaluation or assisted state agencies with many other diseases in wildlife to include SARS-CoV-2, plague, tularemia, leptospirosis, rabies, chronic wasting disease, and rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus.

In collaboration with state wildlife agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Tribes, WS addresses livestock depredation and protects human health and safety related to wolves and grizzly bears. WS manages conflicts with gray wolves or Mexican gray wolves in 11 states. WS conducted operations with grizzly bears in 3 states, dispersing 22, capturing-relocating 7, and lethally removing 6 in FY23. Congressional funding of \$4.5 million in FY23 supported protecting livestock from large carnivore predation in 12 states using nonlethal strategies such as range riding, fladry installation, and electric fence construction. WS filled 30 full-time positions and 1 part-time position to implement these strategies. WS' National Wildlife Research Center evaluated the effectiveness of activities to reduce depredation.

In FY23 alone, WS conducted more than 72,950 technical assistance projects to reduce wildlife damage to property in urban, suburban, and rural locations across the country which include: homes, schools, industrial facilities, roads, bridges, airports and airport runways, dams, and electrical and water systems. In addition, WS works to protect wetland habitat, riparian habitat, tidal marsh, and timber from a variety of pest species including feral hogs and nutria, as well as the destruction that beaver can cause. Through cooperator-funded beaver damage management on more than 45,000 sites in 49 states, WS worked to protect roads, bridges, timber, agriculture, property, native habitat, and other natural resources from flooding damage.

WS' National Feral Swine Damage Management Program continued to reduce the impacts of invasive feral swine to American agriculture, natural resources, and property, and to reduce threats to human health and safety, declaring a 12th state (Indiana) free of feral swine since the program's inception in 2014. Work to reduce feral swine damage on approximately 187 million acres continued across 34 states and 3 territories. Funding for the Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program (FSCP) within the 2018 Farm Bill was set to expire at the end of FY23, however, Continuing Resolution (H.R. 6363) provided extensions, adding an additional \$15 million, split between APHIS and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to continue the FSCP.

WS had 3,809 cooperative service and interagency agreements including agriculture, forestry, private industry, state wildlife agencies, state departments of health, state departments of agriculture, schools, universities, counties, local governments, Tribal governments, homeowner associations, conservation groups and others that together with WS, mitigate the damage and dangers that wildlife can inflict. As a byproduct of operational activities in FY23, WS donated more than 651,500 pounds of meat to food banks and other organizations providing for people in need. WS donated an additional 35,800 pounds of meat for non-human consumption.

WS flew 80 aircraft for 16,400 flight hours over a total of 1.1 million miles of flight operations to conduct livestock protection via predator removal, removal of invasive feral swine and brown tree snakes, aerial delivery of vaccine baits (rabies), emergency response, and other missions.

WS processed more than 18,200 strikes with civil aircraft with more than 11,000 strikes with military aircraft also reported. More than 290,000 wildlife strikes with civil aviation have been reported to the National Wildlife Strike Database for civil aviation since WS began keeping records in 1990. Reported wildlife-aircraft strikes continue to increase as airport managers and biologists prioritize reporting all wildlife strikes to the FAA database. Damaging strikes have decreased because of wildlife mitigation and awareness efforts at airfields. WS provided 333 staff years of direct support to assist a total of 782 civil, military, and joint-use airports including about 76% of all U.S. commercial passenger airports. WS trained 7,871 airport and military personnel to prevent wildlife from colliding with aircraft, improving travel safety. WS also provided direct staff support to reduce aviation hazards at 151 U.S. or coalition military airbases stateside and in southwest Asia, the Pacific Rim, Africa, Europe, and in the British Indian Ocean Territory, and an additional 110 civil-military airports protecting American military aviation assets and personnel.

It has been WS's cooperative nature that has allowed it to accomplish all of the above listed programs and has made it the most cost effective and efficient program in the federal government in the areas of wildlife damage management and public health and safety.

Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l  
Airlines for America  
American Association of Airport Executives  
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges  
American Beekeeping Federation  
American Dairy Goat Association  
American Dairy Sheep Association  
American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Feed Industry Association  
American Goat Federation  
American Horse Council  
American Sheep Industry Association  
American Veterinary Medical Association  
America's Fur Resource Council  
Animal Health Institute  
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies  
Association of National Grasslands  
Big Game Forever  
Blackfeet Nation Agriculture Development Foundation  
Blackfeet Nation Stock Growers Association  
Boone & Crockett Club  
Catfish Farmers of America  
Catfish Institute  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
East Coast Shellfish Growers Association  
Exotic Wildlife Association  
Fur Commission USA  
Livestock Marketing Association  
Mohair Council of America  
Mule Deer Foundation

National Aquaculture Association  
National Association of Counties  
National Association of Federal Veterinarians  
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture  
National Farmers Union  
National Grange  
National Lamb Feeders Association  
National Milk Producers Federation  
National Pork Producers Council  
National Shooting Sports Foundation  
National Sorghum Producers  
National Sunflower Association  
National Women Involved in Farm Economics  
Natural Fiber Alliance  
North American Meat Institute  
North American Renderers Association  
Northwest Aquaculture Alliance  
Public Lands Council  
R-CALF USA  
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation  
Rural & Agriculture Council of America  
Safari Club International  
Society for Range Management  
Sportsmen for Fish & Wildlife  
State Agriculture & Rural Leaders Association  
United States Animal Health Association  
United States Trout Farmers Association  
US Aquaculture Suppliers Association  
USA Rice  
Wild Sheep Foundation  
Wildlife Management Institute

Alabama Catfish Producers  
Alabama Cattlemen's Association  
Alabama Farmers Federation  
Alabama Meat Goat & Sheep Producers  
Arizona Cattle Feeders Association  
Arizona Cattle Growers' Association  
Arizona Cattlemen's Association  
Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society  
Arizona Wool Producers Association  
Arkansas Cattlemen's Association  
Arkansas Farm Bureau  
Arkansas State Sheep Council  
Association of Oregon Counties

Association of Texas Soil & Water Conservation Districts  
California Agricultural Commissioners & Sealers Association  
California Cattlemen's Association  
California Farm Bureau  
California Pork Producers Association  
California Wool Growers Association  
Catfish Farmers of Arkansas  
Colorado Cattlemen's Association  
Colorado Wool Growers Association  
Connecticut Sheep Breeders Association, Inc.

Delta Council  
Empire Sheep Producers  
Florida Aquaculture Association  
Florida Cattlemen's Association  
Florida Tropical Fish Farms Association  
Garden State Sheep Breeders, Inc.  
Georgia Agribusiness Council, Inc.  
Georgia Cattlemen's Association  
Georgia Sheep & Wool Growers Association  
Hawaii Aquaculture & Aquaponics Association  
Hawaii Farm Bureau  
Hawaii Sheep & Goat Association  
Idaho Cattle Association  
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation  
Idaho Outfitters & Guides Association  
Idaho Wool Growers Association  
Illinois Beef Association  
Illinois Lamb & Wool Producers, Inc.  
Independent Beef Association of North Dakota  
Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas  
Indiana Sheep Association  
Iowa Cattlemen's Association  
Iowa Sheep Industry Association  
Jack H. Berryman Institute, Utah State University  
Kansas Livestock Association  
Kansas Sheep Association  
Kentucky Aquaculture Association  
Kentucky Cattlemen's Association  
Kentucky Sheep & Wool Producers  
Louisiana Cattlemen's Association  
Louisiana Farm Bureau  
Maine Aquaculture Association  
Maine Sheep Breeders Association  
Maryland Sheep Breeders Association  
Massachusetts Federation of Sheep Associations  
Meat Sheep Alliance of Florida, Inc.  
Michigan Aquaculture Association  
Michigan Sheep Producers Association  
Minnesota Lamb & Wool Producers  
Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association  
Missouri Cattlemen's Association  
Missouri Sheep Producers, Inc.  
Montana Association of State Grazing Districts  
Montana Farm Bureau Federation  
Montana Public Lands Council  
Montana Stockgrowers Association  
Montana Wool Growers Association  
Nebraska Cattlemen, Inc.  
Nebraska Farmers Union  
Nebraska Sheep & Goat Producers  
Nebraska State Grange

Nebraska Women Involved in Farm Economics  
Nevada Cattlemen's Association  
Nevada Central Committee for State Grazing Boards  
Nevada Department of Agriculture  
Nevada Farm Bureau Federation  
Nevada Rangeland Resources Commission  
Nevada Wool Growers Association  
New Hampshire Sheep & Wool Growers Association  
New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association  
New Mexico Department of Agriculture  
New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau  
New Mexico Federal Lands Council  
New Mexico Trappers Association  
New Mexico Wool Growers, Inc.  
North Carolina Cattlemen's Association  
North Carolina Sheep Producers Association  
North Central Oregon Livestock Association  
North Dakota Department of Agriculture  
North Dakota Game & Fish Department  
North Dakota Lamb & Wool Producers Association  
North Dakota Stockmen's Association  
Ohio Aquaculture Association  
Ohio Cattlemen's Association  
Ohio Dairy Producers Association  
Ohio Farm Bureau Federation  
Ohio Pork Council  
Ohio Poultry Association  
Ohio Sheep Improvement Association  
Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association  
Oklahoma Farm Bureau  
Oregon Aquaculture Association  
Oregon Cattlemen's Association  
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association  
Oregon Farm Bureau Federation  
Oregon Forest Industries Council  
Oregon Outdoor Council  
Oregon Seed Council  
Oregon Sheep Growers Association  
Oregon Small Woodlands Association  
Oregon Trappers Association  
Oregon United Sporting Dogs Association  
Oregonians for Food & Shelter  
Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association  
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau  
Pennsylvania Sheep & Wool Growers Association  
Rhode Island Sheep Cooperative  
Shellfish Growers of Virginia  
South Carolina Sheep Industries Association  
South Dakota Cattlemen's Association

South Dakota Sheep Growers Association  
South East Dairy Farmers Association  
Sportsmen for Fish & Wildlife Idaho  
Tennessee Cattlemen's Association  
Tennessee Farm Bureau  
Tennessee Sheep Producers Association  
Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers  
Association  
Texas Cattle Feeders Association  
Texas Farm Bureau  
Texas Pork Producers Association  
Texas Sheep & Goat Predator Management  
Board  
Texas Sheep & Goat Raisers' Association Texas  
Wildlife Damage Management Association  
The Port Authority of New York & New  
Jersey  
United Dairymen of Arizona  
Utah Cattlemen's Association  
Utah Department of Agriculture & Food Utah  
Division of Wildlife Resources  
Utah Farm Bureau Federation  
Utah Wild Sheep Foundation  
Vermont Sheep & Goat Association  
Virginia Cattlemen's Association  
Virginia Farm Bureau Federation  
Virginia Sheep Producers Association  
Washington Cattlemen's Association  
Washington Cattle Feeders Association  
Washington State Animal Damage Control  
Program  
Washington State Sheep Producers  
West Virginia Cattlemen's Association  
West Virginia Farm Bureau  
West Virginia Shepherds Federation  
Western Forestry & Conservation Association  
Western United Dairymen  
White Tail Deer Farmers of Ohio  
Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association  
Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association  
Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation  
Wisconsin Firearms Owners, Ranges, Club &  
Educators  
Wisconsin Sheep Breeders Cooperative  
Wyoming Animal Damage Management Board

Wyoming Association of County Predatory  
Animal Boards  
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation  
Wyoming Game & Fish Department  
Wyoming Sportsmen for Fish & Wildlife  
Wyoming Stock Growers Association  
Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation  
Wyoming Wool Growers Association