

At Risk: Agriculture, Natural Resources, Property, and Human Health

- Texas is a diverse mix of urban, suburban, agricultural, forest, and desert environments — and it is home to more than 28 million people and a wide range of wildlife species.
- Wildlife is important to the aesthetics and health of the state's environment and economy. But wild animals and birds also cause millions of dollars in damage to Texas agriculture, natural resources, property, and their activities can pose a threat to public health and safety.

AgriLife Extension's Response

Texas Wildlife Services (WS) is a cooperative program between the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, and private and public partners.

- Its mission is to use research-based methods and education to protect Texas agriculture and other industries, natural resources, property, and public health and safety from damage caused by wildlife.
- WS is the largest wildlife damage management program in the United States, providing its services on 4,700 properties, covering 17.5 million acres.
- In addition to technical and direct assistance, WS educates property owners and residents about wildlife damage management in both rural and urban areas.
- WS works with Texas livestock industries to help protect beef cows, calves, sheep, and goats from predation losses to coyotes, bobcats, feral hogs, and other predators.
- WS responds to emerging issues, such as rabies threats which affect human health—including canine and bat vectored rabies. In 2017, WS dropped oral rabies baits along the international border to prevent the reemergence of canine and gray fox rabies as well as initiated a public outreach campaign to alert livestock

owners and veterinarians about the risks of vampire bat rabies due to the imminent range expansion of this species into Texas

- Mitigating wildlife attractants at and around airports is necessary to protect the flying public and military aircraft. Through cooperative agreements, WS has full-time wildlife biologists at six Department of Defense airfields and three commercial airports. WS also provides wildlife training to personnel at commercial airports across the state to help cities comply with Federal Aviation Administration requirements.

Economic Impacts

Economic impacts are measured by the reduction in property damage caused by feral hogs and other wildlife, the value of livestock and wildlife saved from predation, and property protected from beaver damage in 2017.

- WS directly assisted landowners in removing over 29,155 feral hogs from more than 4.5 million acres, saving landowners an estimated \$8.7 million in avoided crop and property losses.
- Predation management efforts saved an estimated \$71.4 million in livestock and wildlife losses.
- Beaver damage management protected flood-control structures, roads, bridges, timber, crops, and pastures valued at \$9.7 million.

Texas Wildlife Services programs provide broad benefits for the public, including conserving natural resources, protecting human health and safety, and reducing economic losses.