



# California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association

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## Issue Fact Sheet

**Issue:** Wildlife is a valuable natural resource that is viewed and enjoyed by Americans across the nation. Unfortunately increased urbanization and suburbanization has led to a reduction and fragmentation of wildlife habitat. At the same time wildlife populations continue to expand because of reduced hunting, changes in animal protection status, and the loss of various control mechanisms. Now conflicts between people and wildlife are all too frequent. Funding for USDA's Wildlife Services program has traditionally been through a cooperative agreement between the federal, state and county governments. Since 2002 California Agricultural Commissioners have seen an increase of over 65% in the cost of the program.

**Background:** Wildlife can destroy crops, kill livestock, damage property and natural resources, kill threatened and endangered species and pose a serious risk to public health and safety. Wildlife Services, a program within the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, provides federal leadership and technical expertise to resolve these conflicts.

California is ranked number seven in cattle production in the nation with a farm income of \$2.54 billion on 16,638 ranches. Sheep, goat and lamb production is ranked number three in the nation with a farm income of \$71.89 million on 9,048 ranches. California's agricultural producers and products are very diverse and command national and international recognition. Not only is the livestock industry strong, but the wine industry, orchards (almonds, fruit, berry) rice (wild and white varieties), apiarists, etc. all command nationally and internationally recognized. USDA's Wildlife Service's in California provides a highly effective program to all California cooperators.

In the last fiscal year, California Wildlife Services provided protection for over \$2.6 billion of agricultural resources, including over \$750 million of protected livestock. Wildlife Services is the recognized expert in resolving wildlife public safety events in California.

From coyotes in San Francisco's Presidio, home invasions by bears, responding to public safety calls due to mountain lion threats to assistance with research into the E.Coli outbreak in spinach; Wildlife Services provides professional and timely protection to Californians. Wildlife Services assistance was especially valuable when they responded and cooperated with research entities during the feral swine E.Coli outbreak in spinach; providing samples for analysis and assistance to determine if there was a transference mechanism in feral swine and spinach.

California Wildlife Services also provides an Integrated Pest management plan for aviation safety throughout the state. Annually over 90 million passengers purchase tickets in California. Wildlife strikes cause more than 600,000 hours of aircraft downtime and cost the U.S. civil aviation industry in excess of \$625 million annually. The California WS program provided assistance to 26 airports in 2010, including technical assistance, training, and direct operational management. The diversity of habitats and locations of California's airports makes the California Wildlife Services Airport Program the most diverse in the country.

Wildlife Services also provides a variety of services to the more populated areas of California where mountain lions and coyotes can present a threat to children in parks, schoolyards, and even suburban neighborhoods, skunks bring the threat of rabies to urban communities and uncontrolled beavers threaten to flood residences and businesses near urban creeks and channels.

California has 309 federally threatened and endangered species and habitat destruction, predators and urbanization are continual threats to these species. During fiscal year 2010, USDA's California Wildlife Services biologists and specialists worked on 43 projects to help protect threatened and endangered species protecting over \$590 million of threatened and endangered species resources.

**Status:** The California Department of Food and Agriculture dropped all funding for USDA's California Wildlife Services Program in 2003. Since 2002 California Agricultural Commissioners have seen their cost rise from \$1.7 million in 2002 to \$2.37 million in 2009 statewide.

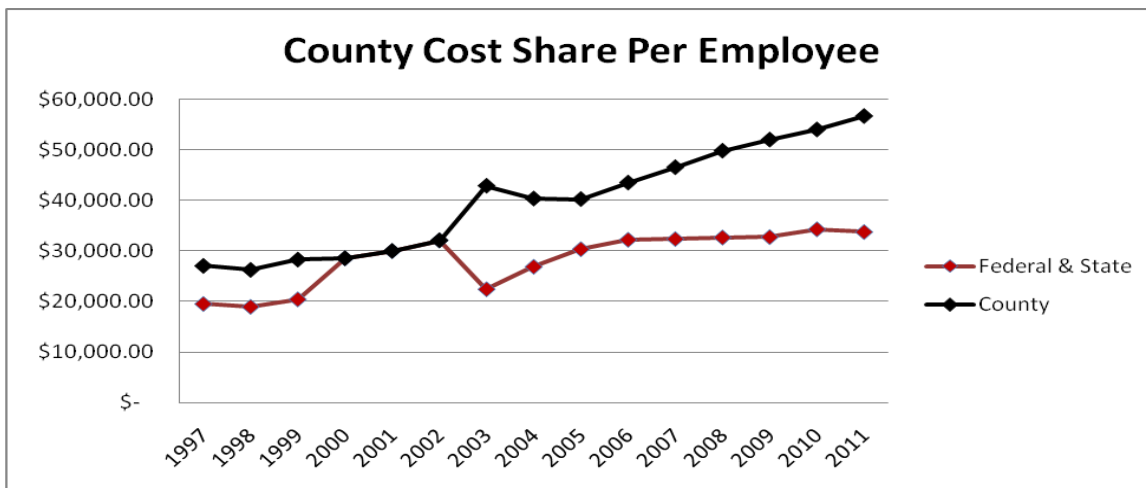
The total USDA contribution to the 2010 California Wildlife Service's budget was \$1,682,932, which equates to \$.05 per person in the nation's most populous state. The California Wildlife Service's budget for the 2011 fiscal year is decreasing by \$63,293. USDA's contribution to the program in 2010 will make California one of the lowest states in per capita funding for this program.

Current estimates conclude that in order to bring the cost of a Wildlife Services Specialist to a 50:50 cost share, the state of California needs additional funding of at least \$463,326.

The Administration's proposed FY 2012 budget will reduce USDA Wildlife Services programs by \$13 million from the enacted FY 2010 level, from \$98 million to \$85 million. Moreover the FY 2012 budget states, "...additional contributions from cooperators of Wildlife Damage Management programs will be sought." We understand that in the worst case scenario, California counties should expect another 3.9% increase over last year's contracts. This equates to approximately 80 hours per Wildlife Specialist. Thus if the county cannot pick up the 3.9% increase, furloughs of Wildlife Specialists must ensue.

Moreover, USDA's FY 2012 budget proposes \$29 million for Animal Care activities, including "an increase of about \$6 million for increased investigation of problematic dog breeders and dealers."

**Action Item:** Consider reallocating funds from within WS projects to focus more on public safety issues like cougars near golf courses or coyotes in the Presidio and the protection of \$2.6 billion of agricultural resources, including over \$750 million of livestock in California.



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