

March 16th, 2021

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair, Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Hoeven
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture
Rural Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United State Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy, Vice Chairman Shelby, Chair Baldwin and Ranking Member Hoeven:

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 and 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 resulting in losses of \$6 to \$12 million annually from double-crested cormorants in Mississippi alone. As a result, WS is an essential program to U.S. agriculture.

WS assists farmers and ranchers in 50 states and 2 territories to reduce the impact of predators on their animals, protecting 4.5 million head of cattle, 3.4 million head of sheep, and 550,000 head of other livestock in 375,000 direct control actions and nearly 80,000 technical assistance activities that enable 12,043 producers to implement improved husbandry and methods such as the use of guard animals, exclusion, fencing, and predator dispersal. WS conducted 88 predator management workshops attended by more than 6,900 individuals from 23 states and Puerto Rico. WS conducted direct cormorant management on 61 roosts at 77 facilities in 3 south-central states and assisted 200 producers with permit applications to protect aquaculture, surveyed 61 roosts containing 57,500 double-crested cormorants, dispersed 164,378 cormorants and removed 11,797 from 21 states to protect farmed fish from avian depredation, an industry valued at \$1.5 billion nationally.

In this unique year, WS deployed a total of 343 personnel days for five mobilized responses related to animal diseases, natural disasters and special projects with local, state, and Federal agencies. WS Emergency Responses included COVID-19 in mink (Oregon), virulent New Castle (Southern California), and Chronic Wasting Diseases surveillance. WS provided critical care for domestic animals and livestock during the California and Oregon wildfires.

The spread of wildlife-borne diseases to humans, livestock and other wildlife is a growing concern. WS is often the first line of defense in reducing and eliminating diseases such as the West Nile virus, avian influenza, pandemic H1N1, chronic wasting disease, pseudo rabies, bubonic plague, Hantavirus, Lyme disease, bovine tuberculosis and rabies. In fact, rabies-associated costs range from \$300 to \$450 million annually in the U.S. primarily for pet vaccinations, education, diagnostics, post-exposure treatment and case investigations. In 2020, WS distributed more than 9.3 million oral rabies vaccination baits over

58,000 square miles and collected samples from more than 6,800 wild animals in 20 States to reduce rabies in wildlife and prevent disease spread to people, livestock and pets. WS also collected disease samples from more than 12,400 animals from 98 different wildlife species in 39 states, testing for 29 diseases, including: chronic wasting disease, Lyme disease, plague, and tularemia.

WS encountered gray wolves in six states: dispersed five, captured-and-released 58, and intentionally lethally removed 381. In collaboration with State wildlife agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and Tribes, WS can address livestock depredation and protect human health/safety related to wolves. It provides service to capture and mark wolves and grizzly bears for research and population monitoring. In one state, WS conducted operations with grizzly bears, capturing/relocating 14 and lethally removing six. Congressional funding of \$1.38 million supported protecting livestock from large carnivore predation in 12 states using nonlethal strategies such as range riding, fladry installation, and electric fence-building. WS filled 18 positions in 11 States to implement these strategies and two National Wildlife Research Center units evaluated the effectiveness of activities to reduce depredation.

WS flew 69 aircraft in 14,535 hours of flight time, a total of 1.24 million miles of low-level flight operations to conduct livestock protection via predator removal, removal of invasive feral swine and brown treesnakes, aerial delivery of vaccine baits for rabies, emergency response and other missions. It is estimated that there are more than 6 million feral swine in at least 35 states and while initial damage estimates were greater than \$1.5 billion per year, more recent reports suggest that figure is more likely between \$2 and \$2.5 billion annually with more than \$800 million of damage to agriculture resources.

In FY20 alone, WS conducted nearly 80,000 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 wetlands 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 6,100 sites in 43 states, to protect roads, bridges, timber, agriculture, property, and native habitat and other natural resources from flooding damage estimated at \$92.2 million.

Protection of natural resources is a growing need. WS has invested resources in conservation of game species including mule deer, bighorn sheep, antelope and waterfowl in eight states. In FY20, WS selected 35 projects in 12 states - in cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service under the latest Farm Bill - focusing on specific problem populations, while continuing work to reduce feral swine damage in a total of 37 states and 3 territories totaling about 192 million acres. In addition, WS protected 269 threatened and endangered species in 46 states and two territories with \$12.4 million of funding from cooperating agencies and others in support of the Endangered Species Act. WS had more than 3,300 cooperative 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 the "Miracle on the Hudson" demonstrated in 2009, the management of wildlife hazards on and near our nation's airports is a critical safety priority. WS provides valuable support to the aviation community in addressing these hazards. From its assistance in preparing FAA-required wildlife hazard assessments to its help with managing hazardous wildlife populations, WS staff ensure that U.S. airports both meet the regulatory obligations under 14 CFR Part 139 and reduce the safety risks associated with aircraft wildlife strikes. WS also assists the FAA in monitoring national trends regarding wildlife populations and the hazards they pose to aviation. At a time when airports are facing significantly expanded wildlife hazard

management requirements through recently issued FAA Advisory Circulars and grant assurance modifications, its role will be even more critical to the aviation community going forward.

Over 243,000 wildlife strikes with civil aviation have been reported to the National Wildlife Strike Database for Civil Aviation since WS began keeping records in 1990. In FY20, WS processed more than 12,800 strikes with civil aircraft and over 7,800 strikes with military aircraft were reported. Strikes have cost the total U.S. aviation industry well over \$5 billion since 1990. This past fiscal year, WS provided assistance and training to 3,883 airport and military personnel working with 776 civil, military and joint-use airports, including 73% of all U.S. commercial airports to prevent wildlife from colliding with aircraft, improving travel safety for passengers. Moreover, WS provided direct staff support to reduce aviation hazards at 138 U.S. or coalition military airbases stateside and in southwest Asia, the Pacific Rim and international locations, and at 102 civil-military airports protecting American aviation assets and personnel. Damaging strikes have decreased as a result of wildlife mitigation and awareness efforts at airfields.

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.

Chairman Leahy, Vice Chairman Shelby, Chair Baldwin and Ranking Member Hoeven we appreciate your demonstrated leadership and strong support of this essential program. Our organizations are committed to working with you to strengthen WS resources and to ensure a continued federal partnership in the responsible management of our nation's wildlife.

Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l
Airlines for America
American Association of Airport Executives
American Beekeeping Federation
American Dairy Goat Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Feed Industry Association
American Goat Federation
American Horse Council
American Sheep Industry Association
American Society of Agricultural and Biological
Engineers
American Veterinary Medical Association
Animal Health Institute
Association of American Veterinary Medical
Colleges
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Association of National Grasslands
Big Game Forever
Catfish Farmers of America
Catfish Institute
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Exotic Wildlife Association
East Coast Shellfish Growers Association
Fur Industries of North America
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 Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Farmers Union
National Grange
National Lamb Feeders Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Pork Producers Council
National Rifle Association
National Sorghum Producers
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Sunflower Association
National Women Involved in Farm Economics
North American Meat Institute
North American Renderers Association
Northwest Aquaculture Alliance
Public Lands Council
R-CALF USA
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Rural and Agriculture Council of America
Safari Club International

Society for Range Management
Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife
State Agriculture and Rural Leaders Association
United States Animal Health Association
U.S. Cattlemen's Association

Alabama Catfish Producers
Alabama Cattlemen's Association
Alabama Farmers Federation
Alabama Meat Goat and Sheep Producers
Arizona Cattle Feeders Association
Arizona Cattle Growers' Association
Arizona Cattlemen's Association
Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society
Arizona Wool Producers Association
Catfish Farmers of Arkansas
Arkansas Cattlemen's Association
Arkansas Farm Bureau
Arkansas State Sheep Council
Association of Oregon Counties
Association of Texas Soil and Water
Conservation Districts
California Agricultural Commissioners and
Sealers Association
California Cattlemen's Association
California Farm Bureau Federation
California Pork Producers Association
California Wool Growers Association
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 and Wool Growers Association
Hawaii Aquaculture and Aquaponics
Association
Hawaii Sheep and Goat Association
Idaho Cattle Association
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation
Idaho Outfitters & Guides Association
Idaho Wool Growers Association
Illinois Beef Association
Illinois Lamb and Wool Producers Inc
Independent Beef Association of North Dakota
Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas

United States Trout Farmers Association
USA Rice
Wild Sheep Foundation
Wildlife Management Institute

Indiana Sheep Association
Iowa Cattlemen's Association
Iowa Sheep Industry Association
Kansas Livestock Association
Kansas Sheep Association
Kentucky Aquaculture Association
Kentucky Cattlemen's Association
Kentucky Sheep and Wool Producers
Association
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 and Wool Producer
Association
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 and Goat Producers
Nebraska State Grange
Nebraska Women Involved in Farm Economics
Nevada Cattlemen's Association
Nevada Department of Agriculture
Nevada Farm Bureau Federation
Nevada Rangeland Resources Commission
Nevada Central Committee for State Grazing
Boards
Nevada Wool Growers Association
New Hampshire Sheep and 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 Dakota Lamb and Wool Producers
Association
North Dakota Stockmen's Association
North Dakota Department of Agriculture
North Dakota Game and Fish Department
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
White Tail Deer Farmers of Ohio
Oklahoma Cattlemen's 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
Oregonians for Food & Shelter
North Central Oregon Livestock Association
Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
Pennsylvania Sheep and Wool Growers
Association
Rhode Island Sheep Cooperative
South Carolina Sheep Industries Association
South Dakota Cattlemen's Association
South Dakota Sheep Growers Association
South East Dairy Farmers Association
Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife Idaho
Tennessee Cattlemen's Association
Tennessee Sheep Producers Association
Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers
Association
Texas Cattle Feeders Association
Texas Farm Bureau
Texas Pork Producers Association
Texas Sheep and Goat Predator Management
Board
Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers' Association
Texas Wildlife Damage Management
Association

The Port Authority of New York and New
Jersey
United Dairymen of Arizona
Utah Cattlemen's Association
Utah Farm Bureau Federation
Utah Wild Sheep Foundation
Utah Wildlife Board
Utah Wool Growers Association
Jack H. Berryman Institute, Utah State
University
Vermont Sheep and Goat Association
Virginia Farm Bureau Federation
Virginia Cattlemen's Association
Virginia Sheep Producers Association
Shellfish Growers of Virginia
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 and Conservation Association
Western United Dairymen
Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association
Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association
Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation
Wisconsin Firearms Owners, Ranges, Club and
Educators
Wisconsin Sheep Breeders Cooperative
Wyoming Animal Damage Management Board
Wyoming Association of County Predatory
Animal Boards
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Wyoming Sportsmen for Fish & Wildlife
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation
Wyoming Wool Growers Association