

WAFAWA Survey Questions: Alberta Response December 2020

1. Does your agency give landowners big game permits or vouchers that they can use or sell to compensate landowners or offset crop damage? If so, are the permits for antlerless animals, bucks/bulls, or both? Please explain the details of these permits or vouchers?

- No

2. Are landowners allowed to remove big game animals depredating on private lands in an effort to protect their agricultural resources? If so, under what circumstances?

- No. Authority to issue a Damage Control License for ungulates rests with the Executive Director of Fish and Wildlife Stewardship Division and is rarely issued.

3. Does your agency call depredation hunts to target populations on private lands?

- Yes- Depredation hunt

Public depredation hunts can be called on short notice and are typically for antlerless white-tailed deer or mule deer. Following public consultation to help determine the scope and objectives of the hunt, these opportunities are available to the public on a first-come, first-served basis through online license purchase. Season lengths of each hunt can be customized but are historically quite short ie. two weeks to one month and typically occur in mid-winter in response to a large influx of depredation complaints from a defined geographic area. In Alberta, such depredation hunts have typically occurred less than once in a decade.

4. Does your agency have a similar program that promotes hunting on private property, or a similar program that promotes hunting on private property?

- No

5. What type of landowner incentive programs does your agency have that promotes wildlife and allows public hunters on private property (e.g., ranching for wildlife in CO or - programs where landowners financially benefit from big game)?

- There are no such programs which provide direct financial benefit to owners of private property in Alberta.
- Landowner License- Alberta maintains a Landowner License which is available to private landowners for a single antlerless mule deer, antlered mule deer or antlerless elk license to be used within a defined season. In order to qualify for this license, landowners must apply for the annual special license draw opportunity in June which is available to all residents. If they are unsuccessful in the draw, they may, upon proof of ownership of a minimum of 160 acres of private land, purchase the applicable Landowner License for the specific animal and season that they applied for in the draw. There are currently no limits to the number of Landowner Licenses that are available in each Wildlife Management Unit.

6. Does your agency provide damage payments or fencing for big game on private lands? If so, how much per year is paid and how is it funded?

- Yes. 8' game fence (up to 6, 300' rolls) may be loaned on a one-time basis to producers experiencing significant ungulate damage to stacked livestock feed. The producer is responsible for providing the yard design, posts, gates and labour. Alternatively, producers may partner with the government on 8' tall welded portable panels. The government provides the broad specifications for the height and horizontal bar spacing, but the producer designs the panel. Once each project is approved, the producer pays up front for the panels and is reimbursed 1/3 of the project costs up to \$3000. Producers must choose either the game fence loan program or the welded panel partnership. The welded panel partnership is proving popular for those producers who wish to change the location or configuration of their stored livestock feed on a regular basis.
- When stored livestock feed depredation from ungulates occurs, producers may make a compensation claim via the provincial agri-insurance agency Agriculture Financial Services Corporation. Producers interested in participating in the program are not required to carry insurance in order to make a compensation claim. All costs for this program are paid by the federal and provincial governments (48% and 52% respectively); producers pay no premium or administration cost except for the non-refundable appraisal fee of \$25. Following the first life-time claim, producers are insured for 100% of the adjusted crop value but must follow government recommendations for how to prevent future damage. Upon receipt of a second compensation claim from the same producer, if the producers has not implemented the recommended mitigation, the value of the claim is reduced by 50%. If, for any subsequent life time complaints, the producer has not implemented the mitigation recommendations, no compensation claims are paid. Producers interested in participating in the program are not required to carry insurance in order to make a compensation claim. Program conditions may be found at: <https://afsc.ca/booklet/program-information-for-the-wildlife-damage-compensation-program/>
- When standing crop (hay or annual crop) depredation from ungulates occurs, producers may make a compensation claim via the Wildlife Damage Compensation Program managed by the provincial agri-insurance agency Agriculture Financial Services Corporation. All costs for this program are paid by the federal and provincial governments (52% and 48% respectively); producers pay no premium or administration cost except for the non-refundable appraisal fee of \$25. Producers interested in participating in the program are not required to carry insurance in order to make a compensation claim. While there are program conditions, there are not limits to compensation claims similar to those for stacked livestock feed. This represents the impracticality of protecting large acreages of crops from ungulate depredation. Program conditions may be found at: <https://afsc.ca/booklet/program-information-for-the-wildlife-damage-compensation-program/>
- There are no ungulate damage compensation or direct mitigation/prevention programs for any other agricultural cropping systems such as market gardens, orchards or vineyards. The Wildlife Management Branch provides technical assistance and recommendations for damage mitigation and prevention to these types of operations.

7. What mitigation measures does your agency employ to reduce big game damage (e.g., provide temporary fencing, hazing animals, agency removals of big game)?

- Alleviation measures -

We use a temporary (plastic stack wrap) fencing loan program and a permanent fencing (game fence program described above) loan program and lend scare cannons (Ungulate Damage Prevention Program). After 30 years of delivering the permanent fence loan program we can keep up with demand on an average year, spending approximately \$30,000 annually. The partnership program for welded panels is increasing in popularity.

8. Does your agency have an urban deer program? If so, what does that entail?

- No. There is not a formal, structured urban deer mitigation or removal program. There have been some management antlerless deer licensed hunts on a periodic basis in the vicinity of one Alberta town, but these have not been delivered consistently. The urban deer issue has grown in the last decade, with the number of municipalities that request support on an annual basis increasing. Generally, the issue is limited to the southern third of the province. We have encouraged municipalities, as a first step, to pass and enforce no wildlife feeding bylaws and complete consultation with residents in advance of detailed discussions and planning on deer removal.

9. What other programs does your agency have in place to promote tolerance of big game on private lands?

- N/A. Private conservation organizations have a variety of landowner incentive programs that focus on maintaining wildlife habitat.

10. Does your agency respond to all wildlife conflict calls or is it limited to specific species or guilds of species?

- No. In Alberta, response is limited to conflicts which involve species that are potentially harmful to humans or involve a high level of property damage.
- Black bears, cougars, wolves, coyotes, red fox, red squirrel, badger, striped skunk, porcupine, rabbit, hare, raccoon, woodchuck and beavers may be hunted on private land without a license at all times of the year. Beaver, red squirrel, badger and striped skunk may be controlled with the use of traps on private land at all times of the year. Bobcat may be hunted without a license (certain restrictions on season and WMU apply).
- Municipalities have delegated authority under the *Wildlife Act* to authorize staff and contractors to control certain species within the urban boundaries.
- Waterfowl depredation on agricultural crops is handled primarily through rural municipalities who have been offered scare cannons to lend to producers.
- In SW Alberta, the Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association has been provided with provincial funding to deliver on-the-ground large carnivore damage mitigation programs in partnership with producers.

11. What program(s) in your agency provide response to negative wildlife interaction (wildlife conflict) complaints and depredation. If the responsibility is split or shared between programs (i.e. Wildlife Program/Enforcement Program) or contracted or referred to another agency or private party, please describe how the work is assigned or shared. (e.g. by species, commercial agriculture versus residential, public safety versus property damage, etc.)

- In Alberta, primary response to conflicts involving dangerous wildlife species are handled by the Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Service. The fate of captured predators is guided by a Response Guide for each species (black bears, grizzly bears, coyotes, wolves, cougars and ungulates).
- The Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Service maintains responsibility for large predator control actions related to conflicts with livestock. This involves primary responsibility for investigation of livestock mortality and may involve capture, relocation, euthanizing or deployment of toxicants (wolves).
- Wildlife Management Branch maintains responsibility for the administration of the Wildlife Predator Compensation Program, which provides financial compensation to producers who have lost livestock (cattle, sheep, goats, bison and pigs) to eligible predators (wolves, bears, cougars and eagles).
- Wildlife Management Branch and Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Service share responsibilities in the delivery of the Ungulate Damage Prevention Program. Wildlife Management Branch funds the program and carries out much of the logistics while Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Service, due to their more broad geographic presence in rural areas, functions as the initial primary landowner contact.
- Wildlife Management Branch and Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Service share responsibility for the issuance of Damage Control Licenses (DCL) to the public. A DCL is a tool that is used to permit the capture and euthanizing of certain species of wildlife that are causing property damage or pose a threat to human safety and normal hunting activities are either not permitted or practical.
- The department of Agriculture and Forestry and delegated authorities in rural municipalities provide some conflict mitigation and control services to agricultural producers ie. distribution of toxicants for Richardson ground squirrel, striped skunk and coyote control. Some rural municipalities lend small animal traps to landowners.
- The Waterfowl Crop Damage Control Program is formally delegated to the Alberta Conservation Association (a delegated authority under the *Wildlife Act* which utilizes revenue from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses to manage wildlife, fisheries and habitat programs), who, in 2012 sub-delegated the program to rural municipalities. The program is limited to the lending of scare cannons.

- Public requests for lethal control of migratory birds are the responsibility of the Canadian Wildlife Service.

12. Please describe what funding sources support wildlife conflict response and depredation payments if applicable in your agency. Please include specifics regarding where the funding comes from for expenses such as staff and equipment, commercial crop loss compensation, livestock predation compensation, non-lethal deterrent programs, outreach and education, or any other services or materials provided in response to wildlife conflict issues.

- Funding for compensation payments under the Wildlife Predator Compensation Program are split between the Alberta Conservation Association (52% and this comes from the sale of recreational hunting and fishing licenses) and the Government of Canada (48%).
- Costs associated with the investigation of livestock predation and other large predator conflicts are covered by provincial funding for the Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Service.
- Costs associated with the administration and management of the Wildlife Predator Compensation Program are covered by provincial funding for the Wildlife Management Branch.
- Funding for the Ungulate Damage Prevention Program is supplied by provincial allocation to the Wildlife Management Branch.
- The Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program is funded from the sale of recreational hunting and fishing licenses and provided to the Alberta Conservation Association.
- All funding for compensation payments under the Wildlife Damage Compensation Program as administered by Agriculture Financial Services Corporation comes from Alberta (52%) and the Government of Canada (48%). This program falls under a larger national agri-insurance framework where each province has funding support agreements for many types of producer support programs in place with the federal government.