

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
 - Landowners who meet eligibility requirements (87-1-225, MCA) may select up to 25% of the hunters on a damage hunt or management hunt. Or all hunters (maximum of 12) for a supplemental game damage license hunt if the damage occurs in districts with unlimited permits. Additionally, there is no cost to landowners for damage hunts, fencing materials, materials for stackyards to protect stored crops or other deterrents such as propane cannons.

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?

- Yes
 - Landowners who allow public hunting or do not significantly restrict public hunting (87-1-225, MCA) may be issued a kill permit if public hunting is deemed to not be a viable option to harvest or redistribute animals causing depredation.
 - Kill permits will be reviewed, signed and issued by the Regional Supervisor or designee. Kill permits will not be used if public hunting is a viable option.
 - Kill permits will be delivered to the landowners to whom they are issued.
 - Individual authorized by the kill permit to dispatch animals shall be responsible for field-dressing and providing proper care of animal carcasses prior to FWP staff taking possession of dead animals.
 - Responsibility for the disposition of animals taken by kill permits will be shared by both biologists and wardens, who will also be responsible for ensuring that any animals taken are given proper care and delivered to the appropriate social service organization.
 - In situations involving haystack damage, kill permits or damage hunts may be utilized only if the use of fencing or other barriers is not an option. The landowner must also be informed that the department may require that a stackyard or other structure must be installed in the future to address the damage problems in order for the department to continue offering assistance.
 - Landowners who are issued kill permits may be instructed to dispatch a certain number of animals per day in order to facilitate effective control measures. In all cases, the specified total number of animals to be taken, gender (if specified), and total number of animals taken daily will appear in writing on the kill permit.
 - Except in unusual circumstances, kill permits shall be used only by the landowner to whom the permit is issued, a department-approved agent, family member or employee of the landowner.

- Department personnel will take animals under authority of a kill permit only under special circumstances, such as the landowner's physical inability to dispatch the animals himself or when department personnel can more effectively accomplish the task.
- Except in extraordinary circumstances, and only by the approval of the Regional Supervisor, kill permits for elk, antelope and deer will not be issued between April 1 through July 31.

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

- Yes
 - Game Damage Hunts, Management Hunts or Supplemental Game Damage Hunts.
- <https://fwp.mt.gov/conservation/landowner-programs/game-damage-program>

4. Does your agency have “private lands only” permits that are issued to the public, or a similar program that promotes hunting on private property?

- Yes
 - Private lands only elk B licenses and permits and other license options that are not valid on National Forest- thus being allowed on private land only as well as some options for School Trust and BLM lands, but not National Forest Lands.

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 CWMU's in UT - programs where landowners financially benefit from big game)?

- Montana has many of public access programs where private landowners are compensated monetarily and/or with other benefits such as a complimentary license or issuance of a permit, license or combination of the two for allowing public hunting.

Each program has it's own nuances and policies, the largest being the MT Block Management program where over 1,200 landowners are paid annually nearly \$6.5 million to compensate for the impacts of allowing public hunting on over 7 million acres o enrolled lands. Landowners also receive a complimentary license benefit for participating in the program. The license may be issued to a family member or employee, but not bartered or sold – <https://fwp.mt.gov/bma>

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?

- No
 - payments are not provided but fencing materials can be provided including and up to a complete stackyard kit to protect stored crops for eligible landowners. The game damage budget is approximately \$385,000 annually.

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)?

- In response to damage complaints qualifying for assistance under [87-1-225](#) , MCA, and ARM [12.9.803](#), a regional supervisor may address the problem in the following ways:
 - (a) by herding as a temporary measure;

- (b) by employing a variety of animal dispersal methods, such as airplanes, snowmobiles, cracker shells, and scareguns;
- (c) by using repellents as temporary solutions;
- (d) by using fencing options if the problem is chronic and involves haystacks and other stored crops;
- (e) by authorizing kill permits;
- (f) the department, through the regional supervisor or designated staff, has the discretion to issue supplemental game damage licenses for antlerless animals to hunters as an alternative to a kill permit being issued to a landowner. Supplemental game damage licenses administrative procedures are outlined in ARM [12.9.805](#);
- (g) damage hunts may be used to address site-specific damage problems in accordance with ARM [12.9.804](#);
- (h) netting or mechanical devices may be used to reduce tree damage; and
- (i) archery, shotgun, muzzle loader weapons, or other weapons may be used as an alternative hunting method when rifle hunting poses a threat to the safety and welfare of persons or property.

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

- Yes
 - By statute, individual municipalities may develop urban deer management programs that may include harvest by hunters or take by the municipality. The statute requires that the plan be approved by the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission, and any cost associated with the plan is borne by the municipality.

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

- No other programs.

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

Yes

87-1-225. Regulation of wild animals damaging property -- public hunting requirements. (1) Subject to the provisions of subsection (2), a landowner is eligible for game damage assistance under subsection (3) if the landowner:

- (a) allows public hunting during established hunting seasons; or
- (b) does not significantly reduce public hunting through imposed restrictions.

(2) The department may provide game damage assistance when public hunting on a landowner's property has been denied because of unique or special circumstances that have rendered public hunting inappropriate.

(3) **Within 48 hours after receiving a request or complaint from any landholder or person in possession and having charge of any land in the state that wild animals of the state, protected by the fish and game laws and regulations, are doing damage to the property or crops on the property, the department shall investigate and arrange to study the situation with**

respect to damage and depredation. The department may then decide to open a special season on the game or, if the special season method is not feasible, the department may destroy the animals causing the damage. The department may authorize and grant the holders of the property permission to kill or destroy a specified number of the animals causing the damage. A wild, ferocious animal damaging property or endangering life is not covered by this section.

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 Montana, response is shared between law enforcement and wildlife divisions with the area Regional Supervisor making the final determination. If a complaint comes to a warden, the biologist must review the complaint and vice versa.
- We have specific bear and wolf specialists who respond to incidents regarding bears or wolves as well as a carcass collection program for removal of grizzly bear attractants.
- We hire seasonal hazers to move elk and bison away from cattle for prevention of brucellosis in the Montana Designated Surveillance Area.
- We work closely with Wildlife Services personnel to verify livestock losses, and remove predators that are causing damage to livestock. In addition, producers and landowners may remove animals caught in the act of depredation or receive depredation permits to remove animals that are causing chronic losses in a particular area.
- Damage or nuisance caused by migratory birds is handled primarily by Wildlife Services, depending on the situation. We use propane cannons, pyrotechnics, and other hazing materials are used to deter bird use in problem areas.
- We have specifically trained personnel that respond in the case of a human attack by wildlife.

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.

- Our game damage program is funded strictly by general license revenues.
- Compensation for confirmed livestock loss is funded by general fund and restricted funds (50/50). Verification of loss is done by USDA Wildlife Services and Utah Department of Agriculture and Food personnel who receive some funding via restricted funds.
- Funding for regional predator specialists is provided from restricted funds (specifically from big game license sales) to address predator issues.