

times higher without a livestock protection program in place. New Mexico WS saves about \$3 to \$4 dollars in losses for every Federal dollar spent on predator damage management.

WS cooperates with State agencies to conduct predator management activities in concert with the State's wildlife management goals and objectives. WS also assures environmental impacts are kept to a minimum. For example, although coyotes are the major livestock predator in the State, WS' actions only impact about 5 percent of the coyote population in any 1 year. Accordingly, WS is able to provide livestock protection without significantly affecting the long-term viability of the predator species.

Protecting Agricultural Crops—WS employees working in the middle Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico disperse sandhill cranes and snow geese from crops including alfalfa, chile, and wheat. An integrated wildlife damage management approach is used to reduce damage caused by approximately 30,000 sandhill cranes and 50,000 snow geese. This integrated approach includes the use of lure crops at a nearby Federal wildlife refuge and the selective placement of hunters to reinforce dispersal activities. Cultural practices, including altering planting and watering dates, or planting alternate crops are also recommended when appropriate. This highly successful cooperative effort between WS, the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish has reduced damage in the area from an estimated \$100,000 per year to less than \$650 during the 1998-1999 wintering season and \$400 in the 1999-2000 season. These efforts have also increased landowner tolerance of these valuable wildlife species.

Protecting Agriculture, Urban/Suburban Property, and Human Health—WS provides technical and direct assistance to manage prairie dogs, pocket gophers, and ground squirrels that cause property damage and present health and safety hazards. These rodents can cause significant problems in both urban and agricultural areas, including burrowing damage to crops, pastures, recreational fields, turf, landscaping, and water control structures. In FY 2000, nearly \$500,000 in rodent damage to property and agriculture was reported in New Mexico. In addition, prairie dogs and ground squirrels are known carriers of plague. WS assists school and urban managers when these species pose a risk to human health, gardens, military installations, and public and private recreational areas.

Looking to the Future

Coyotes are becoming an increasing problem in urban and suburban areas in New Mexico, killing pets and other domestic animals, and posing safety risks to people and children. WS is being called upon more often to provide advice and direct assistance with these problems.

WS participates in a State working group to develop a conservation plan for the black-tailed prairie dog, currently a candidate for the designation of "threatened" under the Federal Endangered Species Act. WS will play a key role in achieving a balance between the need for resolving human conflicts with black-tailed prairie dogs and conservation of the species.

New Mexico Wildlife Services Funding •••••

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

