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ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STATE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICES
FOR WILDLIFE DAMAGE CONTROL

James L. Byford*

The Cooperative Extension Service was established by the Smith-Lever Act in 1914. It was designed to improve the lives of people, through education in: agriculture, natural resources, home economics and community development. Its audiences include both adult and youth. 4-H is the primary youth audience. The Cooperative Extension Service is an "extension" of the Land Grant university in each state. Its employees include university faculty (specialists) and professional agents in every county, in every state in the country. Extension's primary mission is to conduct an educational program, using research-based information. Research results are condensed into a form that the average person can understand. The role of the Cooperative Extension Service in wildlife damage control is encompassed in the following:

- (1) Extension's mission is education through the news media, publications, electronic media, audio/visual media, demonstrations, personal contact and public meetings.
- (2) Extension personnel have a rapport with their audiences. The public recognizes Extension as educational only and, therefore, helpful to them. Since Extension has no regulatory responsibilities, the public doesn't feel that Extension threatens them in any way.
- (3) Extension's educational responsibilities include:
 - a. Teaching environmentally-

- safe, target-specific wildlife damage control methods to landowners, homeowners, and commercial applicators.
 - b. Teaching about laws affecting wildlife damage control.
- (4) Extension is not in the service business. Any wildlife damage control help (other than education) needed by clientele should be referred to commercial applicators.
 - (5) Extension should maintain cooperative relationships with the state game and fish agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. These are the three primary agencies with regulatory responsibilities in wildlife damage control. Extension should be careful not to teach any methods which conflict with regulations of any of these agencies.
 - (6) Because Extension is willing to help landowners and homeowners with wildlife damage problems, it has gained the confidence of these clientele. This has often been the entree to work with these same individuals to attract wildlife, or otherwise enhance wildlife habitat on private lands.
 - (7) In many cases, wildlife damage control involves nothing more than educating landowners/homeowners that the species they are concerned about causes no problems at all.

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