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Controlling Vertebrate Damage: General Considerations

Michigan State University

Cooperative Extension Service

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# CONTROLLING VERTEBRATE DAMAGE

Extension Bulletin E-860

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## *general considerations*

BY GLENN DUDDERAR, Extension Wildlife Specialist

BECAUSE PEOPLE, ANIMALS, and the way they interact are different, values placed on animals vary greatly from highly positive to highly negative. Most, if not all, vertebrates have positive value to some people; but when animals increase in numbers or cause damage to other things that humans value, damage control often becomes necessary. Therefore, to avoid unnecessarily injuring valuable animals, all damage-control techniques, however safe or humane, must be applied with care.

Note that the term used is *damage control* and not pest control, or predator or animal control. This term emphasizes reducing or eliminating damage and implies the use of methods that alter the behavior of man and/or animals so that the animal is no longer destructive.

Destroying an animal is only one of many ways to prevent damage. Techniques intended to kill are sometimes the most inefficient control methods.

Furthermore, vertebrate damage control techniques must not only prevent damage, but must be appropriate to the situation to avoid creating other damage, and must protect those values important to the environment and, thus, man.

There are five ways to prevent damage:

1. Alter the concept of damage.  
EXAMPLE: Rent goose hunting blinds to more than compensate for "damage" done by geese to grain.
2. Alter the situation so that damage does not occur.  
EXAMPLE: plant bird-resistant crops.
3. Exclude the animal from the damage site.  
EXAMPLE: rodent proofing, fencing, or screening.

4. Repel the animal from the damage site.

EXAMPLE: Use automatic noise makers to frighten birds.

5. Eliminate the damage-causing individual or reduce the damage-causing population.

EXAMPLES: trap or poison rodents; alter habitat to reduce survival.

No damage control technique is appropriate to all situations. Effective, safe damage control depends on choosing the most appropriate technique from a wide variety of alternatives. These leaflets in this series will suggest several alternatives, where possible, for each type of damage; however, it remains for the reader to decide which is most appropriate to his situation.

All alternatives are legal as of June, 1976, in the state of Michigan, if used according to the provisions given. Since subsequent changes in status are probable, users should check the legality of any alternative before use.

### General Guidelines

- READ THE LABEL OR INSTRUCTIONS for each damage control technique, device or chemical. Follow instructions exactly. Heed all cautions and warnings.
- Do not use the damage control technique, device or chemical in ways that will harm animals which are not the target of control.
- Keep chemicals in the container in which you bought them. Store and use chemicals and devices so that children, pets, livestock and non-target animals cannot get them. Store chemicals away from food, feed, seeds or materials that may become contaminated.
- Wash hands, face, and all utensils after using chemicals. Clean application equipment thoroughly after use.

—Dispose of containers as directed on the label.

—Call a physician immediately if you feel unusual or ill during or after using a chemical.

### State Laws

In Michigan, it is unlawful at any time to make use of any pit, pit fall, dead fall, scaffold, raised platform, cage, snare, net, baited hood, or any similar device, or any drug, poison, salt, chemical, smoke, gas, explosive, weasel, ferret, fitchew, artificial light, cross-bow, arbalest, or mechanical device, for the purpose of injuring, capturing, or killing any wild birds or wild animals in this state. However, the Law Enforcement Division, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, is authorized to issue special permits to prevent or control by shooting, trapping or otherwise, the deprivations of birds and animals otherwise protected.

Anyone having questions on the legality of a control method is urged to contact the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Inquiries about permits and the legality of control methods should be directed to the local conservation officer of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources or to the appropriate Natural Resource District Headquarters, listed on page 2.

### Federal Laws

Some species of wildlife are protected by both state and federal law. All control of damage caused by animals also protected by federal law—migratory birds, song birds, predatory birds, and endangered species—requires a special permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Lewis-Cass Building, Lansing, MI, 48913. Phone: (517-) 373-1087.

## MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCE DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS

DIST. NO.	LOCATION	AREA CODE PHONE NO	COUNTIES IN DISTRICT
1	Baraga	906-353-6651	Gogebic, Ontonagon, Houghton, Keweenaw, Baraga.
2	Crystal Falls	906-875-6622	Iron, Dickinson, Menominee
3	Escanaba	906-786-2351	Marquette, Alger (west of Munising), Delta
4	Newberry	906-293-5131	Alger (east of Munising), Schoolcraft, Luce, Chippewa, Mackinac.
5	Gaylord	517-732-5128	Emmet, Cheboygan, Presque Isle, Charlevoix, Antrim, Otsego, Montmorency, Alpena.
6	Cadillac	616-775-9727	Leelanau, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Mason, Lake, Oceana, Newaygo, Manistee, Wexford.
7	Mio	517-826-3211	Crawford, Oscoda, Alcona, Missaukee, Iosco, Kalkaska, Roscommon, Ogemaw.
8	Gladwin	517-426-9205	Osceola, Clare, Gladwin, Arenac, Mecosta, Isabella, Midland, Bay.
9	Grand Rapids	616-363-9857	Muskegon, Montcalm, Ottawa, Kent, Ionia.
10	Rose Lake	517-339-8638	Gratiot, Saginaw, Clinton, Shiawassee, Eaton, Ingham, Livingston.
11	Imlay City	313-724-2015	Huron, Tuscola, Sanilac, Genesee, Lapeer, Saint Clair (N <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> ).
12	Plainwell	616-685-6851	Allegan, Barry, Van Buren, Kalamazoo, Cass, Berrien, Saint Joseph.
13	Jackson	517-784-3188	Calhoun, Jackson, Washtenaw, Branch, Hillsdale, Lenawee, Monroe.
14	Pontiac Lake	313-674-2261	Oakland, Macomb, Wayne, St. Clair (S <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> ).