

Wildlife Encounters and Conflicts: A Nebraska Guide To Finding Assistance

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Nebraskans suffering wildlife damage or happening upon injured wildlife can find help from several public and private organizations. This NebGuide describes the most direct route to obtain information, equipment, permits and hands-on assistance.

Assistance with Wildlife Conflicts

Wildlife provides Nebraskans with many economic, recreational and aesthetic benefits. Unfortunately, wildlife behavior negatively impacts personal property, agricultural production and health and safety (*Figure 1*). When wildlife damage becomes intolerable, landowners have two options: resolve the problem on their own or obtain on-site assistance. Whatever decision is made, learning about the latest advances in control methods can save on control costs and further property damage caused by problem animals.

University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension provides a wide range of information on managing wildlife damage. NebGuides on the most common wildlife problems confronting Nebraskans are available at local extension offices or online at <http://ianrpubs.unl.edu/wildlife>. For species and situations not addressed by NebGuides, landowners should consult the book “Prevention and Control of Wildlife Damage,” available through your extension educator or online at <http://icwdm.org/handbook/index.asp>. The Internet Center for Wildlife Damage Management (<http://icwdm.org>) provides other information useful for property owners wanting to mitigate wildlife damage, including tips on identification of damage, additional how-to instructions, Ask the Expert and prevention information.



Figure 1. Cage trapped opossum. Photo by Stephen Vantassel.

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

One of the primary responsibilities of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) is to manage and conserve wildlife and their habitat throughout the state. The NGPC provides information, limited materials and on-site evaluation of damage caused by game and non-game species. In certain circumstances and emergencies, hands-on assistance is provided. Contact the district office of the NGPC nearest you or the NGPC state office at (402) 471-0641 for information or access it online at <http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us>. The NGPC can provide publications, current technical information and a list of cooperating private trappers and hunters that can assist with wildlife damage problems. It also may provide materials to exclude or repel some animals or, where other damage control methods fail, issue permits to trap or shoot some species.

Table I. A quick guide to sources of information (I), materials (M), permits (P), and hands-on assistance (A) for wildlife damage management in Nebraska.

<i>Species</i>	<i>UNLE</i> ¹	<i>WS</i> ²	<i>NGPC</i> ³	<i>AC/HS</i> ⁴	<i>PMPs</i> ⁵	<i>CT</i> ⁶	<i>WRT/RR</i> ⁷
Predators							
badgers	I	IA	I	IA	IA	IA	IA
bobcats	I	I	IA	I		IA	IA
coyotes	I	IAM	I		IA	IAM	IA
foxes	I	IAM	IM	IAM	IA	IA	IA
opossums	I	IA	IM	IAM	IA	IA	IA
raccoons	I	IAM	IM	IAM	IA	IA	IA
skunks	I	IAM	IM	IAM	IA	IA	IA
weasels	I	IAM	IM			IA	IA
Small mammals							
bats	I	IA	I	IAM	IAM		IA
beaver	I	IAM	IP	IM	IAM	IA	IA
house mice	I	IA	I	IM	IAM		IA
moles	I	IA	I		IAM		IA
muskrats	I	IAM	IP	IM	IAM	IA	IA
Norway rats	I	IAM	I	IM	IAM		
pocket gophers	I	IAM	I				IA
prairie dogs	I	IAM	IM		IAM		IA
rabbits	I	IAM	IM	IM	IAM		IA
tree squirrels, ground squirrel	I	I	IM	IAM	IAM		IA
Big game							
deer	I		IAMP	IA			
elk	I		IAM				
pronghorn	I		IAM				
Birds							
blackbirds	I	IA	IM	IM			IA
crows	I	IA	IM	IM			IA
ducks & geese	I	IA	IAM	IA	IAM		IA
aquatic fish eating	I	IAM	IM				IA
house sparrows	I	IA	I		IAM		IA
hawks & owls	I	IA	I	IA			IA
pigeons	I	IA	IM	IM	IAM		IA
doves							IA
starlings	I	IA	IM	IM	IAM		IA
grackles							IA
wild turkeys	I		IAM	IA			IA
all backyard birds: cardinals jays, robins, finch, woodpecker, etc.	I		I				IA

¹University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension. Extension educators are located throughout Nebraska, often in offices associated with county courthouses or government buildings.

Extension Specialist — Wildlife Damage (402) 472-6822

²U.S. Department of Agriculture-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service-Wildlife Services (WS)

State director: Lincoln (402) 434-2340

District supervisor: Ogallala (308) 289-0901

Wildlife disease management specialist: (402) 434-2340

Wildlife specialists:

Creston (402) 920-1330 Mason City (308) 732-3217

Chadron (308) 432-2799 Nelson (402) 225-2253

Gordon (308) 282-0763 Ogallala (308) 284-0163

Gothenburg (308) 537-4217 Sidney (308) 254-7168

Grant (308) 352-4275 Wilcox (308) 478-5312

Hayes Center (308) 285-3754

³Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC)

Wildlife Division main office (Lincoln): (402) 471-5410

District Offices:

Alliance (308) 763-2940 Norfolk (402) 370-3374

Bassett (402) 684-2921 North Platte (308) 535-8025

Kearney (308) 865-5310 Omaha (402) 595-2144

Lincoln (402) 471-5434

⁴Animal Control (AC) / Humane Society (HS)

Aurora AC (402) 461-2307 Lincoln HS (402) 441-4488

Beatrice HS (402) 228-9100 McCook HS (308) 345-2372

Blair AC (402) 426-4747 Norfolk AC (402) 644-8700

Columbus AC (402) 562-7325 North Platte AC (308) 650-7297

Fremont AC (402) 721-3282 Omaha HS (402) 444-7800

Grand Island HS (308) 385-5305 Scottsbluff HS (308) 635-0922

Hastings AC (402) 461-2307 Sidney AC (308) 254-7846

Kearney AC (308) 237-2104 South Sioux City AC (402) 494-6215

Lincoln AC (402) 441-7900

Check your telephone directory for the animal control or humane society office nearest you or contact your local police department or wildlife management professional.

⁵Private Pest Management Professionals (PMPs)

Private PMPs in Nebraska are available primarily in urban areas. Consult your local Yellow Pages under Pest Management for information. Your local Animal control, humane society, or county/district health department may provide recommendations.

⁶Cooperating Trappers (CT). Cooperating private trappers are located throughout Nebraska. Your local district office of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission or the Nebraska Furharvesters Association may provide a list of trappers in your area.

⁷Wildlife Rescue Team, Inc. (WRT/RR). Call (402) 473-1951 for information and assistance with all of Nebraska's wildlife except deer, skunks and raptors (birds of prey). Members do not catch or drive off wildlife. Raptor Recovery of Nebraska has two facilities for injured or orphaned birds of prey and vultures (not nighthawks): (402) 994-2009 — eastern Nebraska and (308) 233-2695 — west of Highway 14.

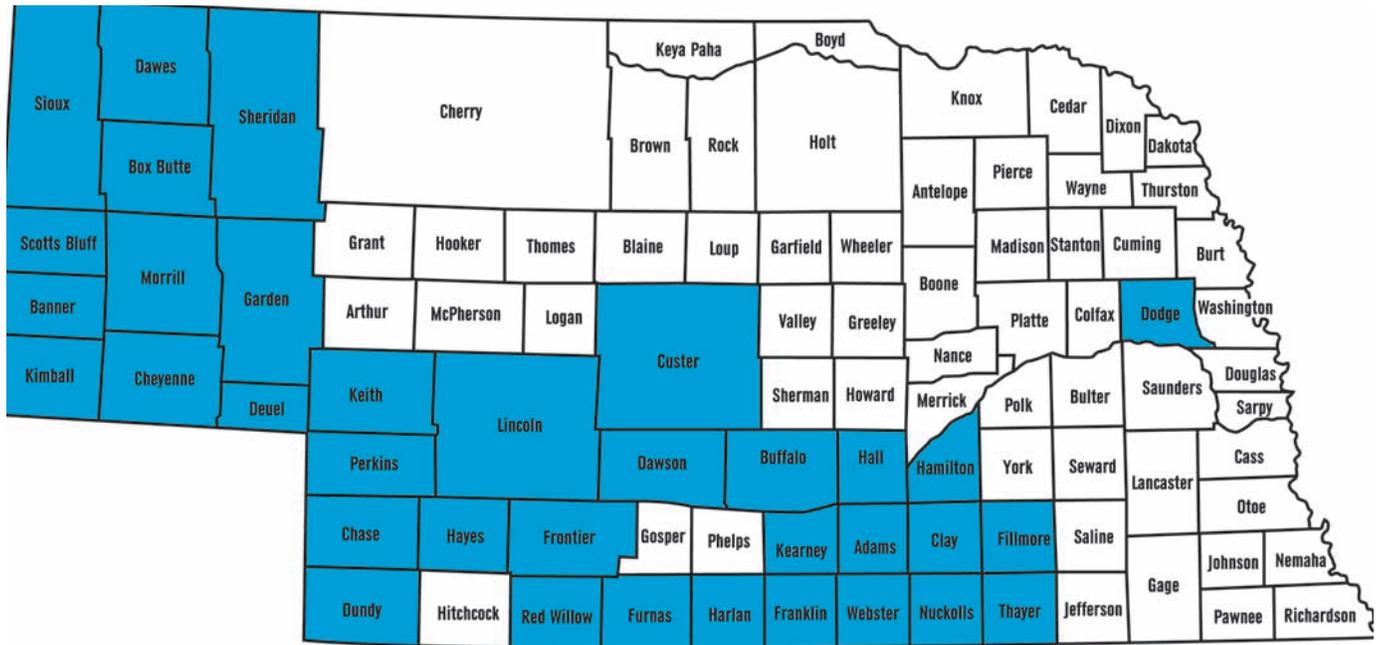


Figure 2. Cooperating counties (shaded blue) receive premium levels of assistance with wildlife damage problems from USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services.

Wildlife Services

The U.S. Department of Agriculture-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service-Wildlife Services (USDA-APHIS-WS) assists farmers, ranchers, residents, industries, organizations and agencies in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. On-site expertise or hands-on assistance is provided on request by wildlife specialists who are available in several areas across Nebraska (Figure 2). The USDA-APHIS-WS state office number is (402) 434-2340. Information, equipment and materials also are available from USDA-APHIS-WS that enable many people to resolve conflicts with wildlife on their own. The USDA-APHIS-WS provides a wide range of services. Its efforts have focused on five major assistance activities, including reducing and protecting livestock from predators; protecting livestock feedlots, dairies, industrial equipment and property from bird damage; protecting crop lands, water impoundments, timber and roadways from beaver damage. High priority has been placed on protecting the traveling public, military personnel and aircraft from wildlife hazards at airports, and protecting public health from wildlife-borne diseases such as rabies, avian influenza, West Nile virus and plague. Information on the national program is available at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage.

Municipal Animal Control

Municipal organizations such as animal control (AC) or humane societies (HS) are available in the vicinity of Aurora, Columbus, Fremont, Hastings, Kearney, Lincoln, McCook, Norfolk, Omaha, Grand Island, North Platte, Scottsbluff and other communities. They regularly provide advice on how to deal with problem wildlife, that are associated with

dwelling such as opossums, raccoons, skunks, squirrels and bats. Most animal control or humane societies have cage/box traps available for loan or for rent. Some, depending on the situation, will assist in removing and disposing of trapped animals for a fee. Whenever a wild animal bites a human, pet, or livestock, the incident should be reported and offending animals tested for rabies. Contact your local office of Animal control, humane society, county or district health department, or state health and human services at (402) 471-2937 for more information. Animal control offices in smaller communities usually are located in local police departments.

Pest Management Professionals

Private pest management professionals (PMPs) and wildlife management professionals (WMPs) are part of the private sector that provide products and services for managing problem wildlife. Most charge fees to assess and resolve wildlife damage and nuisance problems, especially with bats, house mice, house sparrows, moles, Norway rats, opossums, pigeons, raccoons, starlings and tree squirrels. They are available in Nebraska, primarily in urban areas, and may be listed in your local yellow pages under “Animal Pests,” “Pest Control Services” or “Wildlife Management Services.” Property owners should expect that PMPs/WMPs with liability and worker’s comprehensive insurance would cost more than those who lack such protection.

Cooperating Trappers

Cooperating trappers (CTs) are sportspersons willing to assist landowners with problem furbearers. Control typically occurs during the fur-harvest season. For property owners willing to wait, cooperating trappers can provide a

low-cost way of managing wildlife damage. Many will trap in exchange for hunting privileges. If the landowner needs a complete reduction in wildlife damage, then a cooperating trapper probably is not the best option. It is not reasonable to expect a volunteer sportsperson to eliminate an entire colony of beaver or trap until the last coyote is removed. The names of these individuals can be obtained from the NGPC or the Nebraska Furharvesters Association (<http://www.nebraska-furharvesters.com/>).

Assistance with Injured Wildlife

Wildlife rehabilitators are properly trained and licensed individuals and organizations dedicated to helping injured and orphaned wildlife. Wildlife Rescue Team, Inc. (WRT) (402) 473-1951 is a nonprofit, independent, volunteer organization dedicated to raising, rehabilitating and releasing Nebraska's orphaned and injured wildlife back into their natural habitat. The WRT assists the public with all of Nebraska's wildlife except venomous snakes, fish, deer, skunks and raptors (birds of prey such as owls, hawks and eagles). You will be put in touch with a member who has expertise with the animal about which you call. WRT will not perform capture services, however, it will accept wildlife in one's possession. Call Dennis Ferraro (402) 472-8248 for assistance with injured venomous snakes. All injured or orphaned birds of prey and vultures (not nighthawks) can be taken to Raptor Recovery <http://www.raptorrecoverynebr.org> which has two facilities (402)994-2009 for eastern Nebraska and (308) 233-2695 for areas west of Highway 14. Remember that wildlife belong in the wild so if you care, leave them there.

Numerous issues must be considered when dealing with injured animals and what may appear to be abandoned wild babies. The following tips provide guidance on when to leave the animal alone:

- If young appear fat, healthy and exhibit bright eyes, the parent is nearby foraging for food. "Rescue" a young animal only if it appears thin, weak or injured.

- Watch for a few hours to see if the parent returns.
- Rabbits with the strength to run away do not need rescuing. Rabbits become independent when only 4 to 5 inches long. If baby rabbits in the nest have been disturbed, put them back and cover them with the nest material. The mother rabbit only feeds her young in the morning and evening, so don't expect to see her.
- Uninjured baby birds without feathers can be returned to their nests. Whole nests can be put back in the tree from which it fell. Fake nests (margarine tub filled with suitable material) with baby birds can be put back in the tree as parents will find them.
- Young birds (with feathers) capable of hopping on the ground should be left alone. The parents will care for them there until they fly in a few days. Keep kids, cats and dogs away.
- Parents usually retrieve young squirrels that fall from the nest. Rescue only if parents fail to return after a few hours.

*If an injured or orphaned animal does need help, use gloves or a towel to gently pick it up and place it in a covered box with air holes or a paper sack with small air holes. Try to keep it from seeing and hearing you until you can take it to Wildlife Rescue.

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UNL Extension publications are available online at <http://extension.unl.edu/publications>.

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