

A Farmer's Guide for Control of Wildlife Damage to Crops and Livestock

This guide is the result of a collaborative effort between Maine Farm Bureau & Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. It is intended to assure that farmers are informed of the latest and most effective legal methods to manage wildlife damage to their crops. Most of the permissions regarding lethal removal are limited in their use to farmers, not to the larger sporting community. This document defines a farmer to be a cultivator, owner, mortgagee, or keeper of livestock, crops, or orchards, meaning farm workers, owners, or employees.



Wildlife damage to farm crops or livestock is a perennial problem for most Maine farmers. Over the years, many techniques for control have been suggested: propane cannons, sirens, motion lights, predator silhouettes, repellants, and pyrotechnics, among many others. Typically, these work with varied success for a while, but most species of wildlife soon become used to them.

Quality fencing generally works well but is often prohibitively expensive. While we encourage use of any or all of these techniques a first option, in many instances lethal removal is a last resort. Please contact your local game warden or regional biologist for assistance and/or the list of animal damage control (ADC) agents who may be hired to accomplish lethal removal.

Farmers may lethally remove many species of wildlife day or night themselves, when the animals are found actively destroying orchards or crops (except for grasses, clover, or grain fields), property, or harassing livestock. Deer, bear, coyote, wild turkey, English or European house sparrows, European starlings, rock pigeons (rock dove), fox, bobcat, fisher, mink, weasel, raccoon, skunk, opossum, and moose, may be immediately removed when causing damage, **but in such cases a game warden must be notified within 12 hours after wounding, taking or killing of the animal.** The deer, bear, moose, or wild turkey must immediately be properly field dressed, and the meat cared for.

Beaver, crows, & geese may only be lethally removed with special advance permission from a game warden.

Farmers may be able to enlist local hunters or neighbors to help remove problem animals; wardens and biologist are authorized to issue special permits for that purpose. Suggestions to help mitigate damage to crops and livestock by pest species appears below:



Deer: Fencing may be used, commonly woven wire on sturdy posts to a height of 8 feet or electric fencing. Electric fencing is less expensive but requires close attention to competing vegetation which may ground electric current. **Lethal removal is allowed but requires notice within 12 hours to a game warden after wounding, taking, or killing.** Field dressing of the carcass and proper care of the meat must be done immediately. Check with wardens regarding disposal and distribution of the meat – a possession permit is needed. Propane cannons may be effective, and MDIFW wardens may be able to lend these to farmers in limited circumstances. In residential areas, use of bows or crossbows for lethal removal may allow takings without upsetting neighbors.





Beaver: With **permission**, farmers may be able to lethally remove beaver. Be sure to ask a game warden in advance for authorization. A beaver dam may be removed with Department permission. Also, with permission, a dam may be breached, and beaver may be lethally removed as they attempt to rebuild it.





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 **Bear:** Most bear damage on farms involves beehives. The most effective and long-term technique for making hives less accessible is electric fence. Audio or visual deterrents may provide short-term relief. Local hounds people may be available to run bear off, and ADC agents can provide relief. You might consider encouraging local hunters, trappers, or Maine guides to harvest bears on your property during open bear season. **Lethal removal is allowed but requires notice within 12 hours to a game warden after wounding, taking, or killing.** Field dressing of the carcass and proper care of the meat must be done immediately. Check with wardens regarding disposal and distribution of the meat – possession permit needed.


 **Fox, coyote, raccoon, bobcat, opossum, weasel, mink, skunk, and fisher:** These animals often invade pens of chickens, turkeys, game birds, or gardens/vegetable crops. Fencing and overhead netting/fencing is critical to keep these predators out, free-range birds are part of the food chain to these predators. If conventional fencing, hazing, and electric fencing are not working, lethal removal is allowed, but **requires notice within 12 hours to a game warden after wounding, taking or killing.**

 **Moose:** Woven fencing may be the most effective deterrent for moose, but it needs to be ten feet high. A highly visible (white) strip of polyethylene tape should be strung along the top of the fence, and at average moose height, this will help ensure that the moose will be able to avoid the fence. **Lethal removal is allowed but requires notice within 12 hours to a game warden after wounding, taking or killing.** Field dressing of the carcass and proper care of the meat must be done immediately. Check with wardens regarding disposal and distribution of the meat – a possession permit is needed.

 **Turkey:** Immediate hazing when the first bird causes an issue. Place excess feed or silage in an area away from the farm. Allow and encourage hunting on the farm both in the spring and fall. **Lethal removal is allowed but requires notice within 12 hours to a game warden after wounding, taking or killing.** Field dressing of the carcass and proper care of the meat must be done immediately. Check with wardens regarding disposal and distribution of the meat – a possession permit is needed.

 **Geese:** Geese may not be lethally removed during periods of migration but may be removed at other times with warden permission. Propane cannons may be helpful.

 **Crows:** Crows may not be lethally removed until warden permission is received. Propane cannons may be helpful. Avipel (anthraquinone) has proven to be a very effective seed treatment to stop crows, blackbirds, and grackles from eating newly planted corn seed.

 **Birds of prey (Raptors such as owls, eagles, and falcons) and other birds:** These birds are federally protected and cannot be killed or hazed. Contact USDA – APHIS Office at (207) 629-5181 for assistance.

The Maine Farm Bureau & Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife are here to support you with wildlife conflicts. For additional assistance or questions, please contact a game warden or wildlife biologist at the nearest regional office or State Police Dispatch Center.

MDIFW Regional Offices

Region A – Gray.....(207) 287-2345
Region B – Sidney.....(207) 287-5300
Region C – Jonesboro(207) 255-2080
Bangor(207) 941-4440
Region D – Strong(207) 778-3322
Region E – Greenville.....(207) 695-3756
Region F – Enfield(207) 732-4131
Region G – Ashland.....(207) 435-3231
Maine Farm Bureau - 207-622-4111

