



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

ROBERT J. MRAZEK
3RD DISTRICT, NEW YORK

COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS
WHIP AT LARGE

October 15, 1990

The Honorable Clayton Yeutter
Secretary of Agriculture
Department of Agriculture
Fourteenth Street and
Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Yeutter:

I am writing to you to express my deep concern over the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal Damage Control (ADC) program.

In response to my inquiry, and those of other congressional offices, in regard to the USDA's ADC program, I received a letter and fact sheet from Assistant Secretary Jo Ann Smith assuring me that the ADC program is environmentally sound and that non-lethal methods are used whenever possible. Upon further review of the ADC program and the August fact sheet, however, I discovered that the assertions and implications in both Assistant Secretary Smith's letter and the fact sheet are misleading and inaccurate.

For example, both the letter and fact sheet mention several times that non-lethal control methods are used in the ADC program whenever possible. However, neither bother to mention the fact that the ADC is divided into eastern and western regions. In addition, both fail to mention that the western region's funding, which consumes 90 percent of the ADC's entire operational funds, is almost entirely dedicated to lethal control, such as vertebrate poisons.

Continuing, the fact sheet states that, in one year, predators in the West cause some \$60 million worth of losses in sheep and goats. In a recent Government Accounting Office (GAO) report (RCED-90-149), however, it was found that losses of sheep to predators was valued at \$18 million in 1989. I find it unbelievable that the difference between \$18 million and \$60 million is made up with the losses of goats. Very few goats are even raised in this country relative to sheep production. In addition, even the exaggerated loss figures demonstrate that, despite spending millions of dollars, the ADC program still cannot control agricultural losses to wildlife.

Perhaps worst of all, in an effort to placate the public's reaction to the senseless killing of millions of animals by the ADC program, both the letter and fact sheet suggest that the ADC program is conducted following federal guidelines. This statement borders on dishonesty. In fact, as mentioned in the GAO report, there are no guidelines despite repeated pleas from the public and other animal welfare organizations.

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Let me impress upon you my great disappointment with the USDA's handling of this situation. I assumed the information relayed to me by Assistant Secretary Smith was accurate, and as I mentioned before, I enclosed copies of the fact sheet along with my letter to literally hundreds of my constituents before I discovered the gross inaccuracies. Not only do I feel misled by the USDA, but I have embarrassed myself by sending false and misleading information to my constituents.

I would like to suggest to you that rather than trying to mislead a concerned public about the nature of the ADC program, the USDA should address the problems and concentrate on pursuing a program that truly reduces wildlife-caused agricultural losses to acceptable levels while minimizing the killing of wildlife.

I look forward to your response, and I hope the USDA will give serious consideration to my remarks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Mrazek". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Robert J. Mrazek
Member of Congress

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