

Dear Members of the Board of Supervisors:

As a resident of Mendocino County for more than 50 years, I would like to share my thoughts on the item listed below:

Item 6a: Discussion and Possible Action Including Direction to Staff to Author (1) a Resolution to Terminate Cooperative Services Agreement (CSA) with USDA Wildlife Services; and 2) a Resolution to Vest Administrative Responsibility for Implementation of the Mendocino County Non-Lethal Wildlife Damage Management Program with the Mendocino County Animal Care Services

**I am opposed to the proposal to create a new program within the county. Please reject it.**

My wife and I recently had the opportunity to work with the USDA Wildlife Services staff. We had what we believed were opossums living under our home at the corner of Low Gap Road and North Pine Street. We could hear them and smell them. We could see visible damage to our heating vents. While we had a contract with an exterminator who made monthly visits to our home to spray, they explained that they don't deal with anything larger than rats. We didn't know what to do or who to contact for assistance. I visited the Wildlife Issues page on the county website and found the link to the Mendocino Wildlife Association. In talking with them, we came to realize that we had raccoons living under our house, not opossums. They fortunately connected us with the USDA Wildlife Services staff.

Abby from USDA Wildlife Services has visited our home on several occasions to assist us in understanding how to deal with our wildlife issue. She had provided valuable information and training on strategies for addressing the issue. As a specialist at what she does, she is able to quickly identify the nature of the issue and develop a plan for assisting us in resolving it. For a minimal fee, they're willing to return daily for up to a month.

Given previous experience with county agencies, I doubt that any new program developed by the county to replace this valuable service will be as low cost and as effective. The plan calls for additional staff, office space, vehicle upgrades, armed animal control officers, and a multitude of changes that will all cost the county taxpayers money. I don't understand the desire to replace a program that is working with one that will require the county to make additional expenditures and add new employees. It places additional responsibilities on animal control officers and the Sheriff's department at a time when both are fully engaged in their existing work.

As I understand the proposal, it calls for relocating animals. As I read the California Code of Regulations Section 14, 465.5 (g)(1) it states that the "[r]elocation of trapped wildlife is prohibited."

I am happy to answer any questions regarding our experience with the USDA Wildlife Services staff.

Sincerely,

David and Grace Johnston