

March 22nd, 2021

To the Board of Supervisor and whoever else it may concern,

I urge you to KEEP the contract with Wildlife Services. Mendocino County should not adhere to outside sources that make criticisms on how to handle wildlife. Animal control is already over-worked, underpaid, understaffed, and do not have the training to handle wildlife damage control methods. When it comes to problem wildlife, it is impossible to rehabilitate them once captured. With suburban sprawl and the increase of human activity across wildlife landscapes, it is inevitable that there will be human encounters with wildlife. Wildlife Services provides services to the public across this country that gives them the opportunity to decide what they want to do with the animals on an individual basis. Educating the cooperator (landowner) with the animal's biology, ecology, and how to prevent the problem at hand is a crucial service that Wildlife Services provides. Wildlife Services then determines what the cooperator wants to do. Although many are concerned about wildlife being euthanized, Wildlife Services must always undergo a multiple-step process before euthanizing an animal. For example, when a certain species such as a mountain lion continually kills a rancher's livestock, Wildlife Services must first get a non-depredation permit from California Department of Fish and Wildlife. That specific animal has to come back in 10 days and cause damage to a rancher's livestock in order Wildlife Services to get a lethal permit. Once that lethal permit is given, a trap is set for ONLY 10 days to capture the target animal. Wildlife Specialists are trained to understand the damage that wildlife creates, whether it be under a person's home, livestock depredation, property damage or a disease threat. Animal control officers do not have this experience or training, and should not have to perform services outside their job description.

I personally know one of the Wildlife Specialists here in the county, and she is not only incredibly passionate about wildlife, she is even more passionate about helping people understand the animals that live in close proximity to them. Wildlife Services has both a national non-lethal program and a disease program, and is constantly researching how to prevent human-wildlife conflict and damage. Although many are concerned with changing over to 100% non-lethal options using animal control services, non-lethal is not always effective, even after all precautionary measures are taken by wildlife professionals. For example, feral swine are not only invasive, they are often also destructive, disease-carrying competitors with native species and absolutely unable to be rehabilitated. Wildlife Specialists are trained to assess a situation based on the biological and ecological happenings in the area, which is a job that cannot be effectively carried out by animal control services. There is large financial concern with your proposed plan, and it will only harm the county if you were to get rid of Wildlife Services. I suggest you not only KEEP the contract, but create a contract where there are presentations, newsletters, and public outreach that the Wildlife Specialist, a trained wildlife professional, can provide and give to your constituents.

There are many options available. Please consider how working with Wildlife Services can benefit your community instead of hurting animal care and control services. Sources from outside the county do not have the insight or understanding to develop a plan for Mendocino County.

Thank you,

Monica Galliani – Ukiah, Mendocino County

