

Yukon Wildlife Damage Prevention Program Information

Background

Until the winter of 2006-07, individual elk and small groups of deer occasionally grazed in farmers fields, usually during the fall and winter months. In December 2006 however, a large group of approximately 100 elk, primarily cows and calves, returned to farmers fields remaining until April 2007. Farmers expressed concern about the significant loss of improved pasture, damage caused by elk entering on to pastures and foraging on seeded crops, and the mixing with livestock leading to potential disease transmission. Concerns were raised regarding the return of these animals in summer when crops are standing, before harvest, causing significant potential loss to farm income and feed available for livestock use. Some wildlife species have also caused damage to low height wire fencing constructed to contain domestic livestock.

Farmers have agreed that they should improve management practices and stop practices such as leaving windrowed feed for domestic grazing or leaving unprotected stacked feed in fields. Program assistance will only be made available to those that have taken steps to prevent crop predation.

Wildlife damage to forage crops, seeded pastures and fences varies substantially from year to year depending on the severity of winter weather conditions. The Yukon Wildlife Damage Prevention Program is one of the tools available to farmers to assist them in the transition to long term solutions to the conflict.

Eligibility

A producer is eligible if they farm in a documented high risk area or if they have suffered documented damage in excess of \$1,000, caused by elk, moose, deer, or bison on cultivated land that is currently in production and used to produce forage crops for livestock. Assistance is not intended for protection of feed crops which have not been brought in from the field or are stored in a manner which they cannot be protected.

Funding

Funding is provided through a contribution agreement, with 50% advance payment to purchase materials and 50% funding upon inspection of completed work and submission of invoices. Valid invoices are for cost of materials purchased after the date of the agreement.

There are two parts to the program: Fencing Assistance and Aversive Conditioning.

Fencing Assistance

Through the Yukon Wildlife Damage Prevention Program funding is available to producers experiencing severe, recurrent crop depredation for the purchase of approved game farm fencing material. The Fencing Assistance program will cover the costs of game farm fencing material that is installed on the affected agricultural titled lot. Approved game farm fencing material is woven wire that stands at least 7 feet (2.1 meters) high and is secured to solid posts no greater than 20 feet apart. Where the fencing material is purchased by the producer and installed in the manner for which it is intended, the producer is eligible for funding.

The maximum amount that any producer may apply for in one year is \$15,000. Multi-year claims for assistance will only be accepted in cases of severe recurrent damage which cannot be mitigated through other prevention measures and would otherwise be eligible for compensation.

Aversive Conditioning

Producers that choose not to apply for fencing assistance or those that have not yet been able to construct approved fencing may apply to have a contractor with herding dogs visit their farm to have wildlife moved away from crop areas to more preferred areas.

Through the Yukon Wildlife Damage Prevention Program approved applicants can contact the Agriculture branch for herding dog assistance as soon as they experience crop depredation or fencing damage. As conditioning of problem wildlife may take some time, each farm will be eligible to make repeat calls for assistance up to ten times in a program year.

The maximum assistance amount that any producer may apply for in one year is \$2,500. Multi-year claims for assistance will only be accepted in cases of severe recurrent damage which cannot be mitigated through other prevention measures and would otherwise be eligible for compensation.

Contact

Please contact Matt Ball for further information by phone at (867) 667-5838, toll-free outside of Whitehorse at 1-800-661-0408 local 5838, or stop by the Agriculture Branch on the third floor of the Elijah Smith Building in Whitehorse.