

PROJECT REPORT

Project Title: Vertebrate Pest Control Education and Outreach for Licensed Trappers and others dealing with California Wildlife

Research Agency: University of California Cooperative Extension

Principal Investigator: Terrell Salmon

Budget: \$100,700.00

Background:

Vertebrate pests, especially rodents, cause extensive damage to California agriculture and environmental resources. Significant public health problems also result from the activities of many wild vertebrates. Under existing California law, a person who takes fur-bearing mammals or non game mammals by means of a trap, or who sells furs of those mammals, is required to obtain a trapping license from the Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). Persons taking mammals injurious to growing crops or other property are exempted from the trapping license requirement, except for those persons providing trapping services for profit, who are required to obtain a trapping license from the department (DFG). (CDFG, Sections 4005, 4152, 4180). Vertebrate control using poison baits, repellents and other methods are also regulated by both State and federal laws and regulations. There is a tremendous need to provide trappers and others dealing with vertebrate pests with complete information about available controls.

Education and outreach programs should ensure that non-target animals are kept from being ensnared by traps or otherwise harmed. This outreach and education program is one way to provide growers and others with necessary information to ensure safe and effective vertebrate pest control. In addition, there is a need to educate and increase trapper and general public awareness of best management practices relating to controlling vertebrate pests. In order to manage the growing number of incidents of human-wildlife conflicts in California, trapping and killing of some species of animals is a common practice. This is often done by licensed (for-profit) trappers or pest control operators, under the assumption that the licensed individual is trained and competent in appropriate methods of vertebrate pest control. Growers and others routinely conduct vertebrate pest control efforts as well. In reviewing past and problems associated with controlling vertebrate pests, it is obvious that a lack of training and understanding is the key to many problems involving non-target wildlife, domestic animals and the public. There are very few content specific materials immediately available for growers, land managers, trappers and members of the public on methods and materials for vertebrate pest control. Because previous laws pertaining to the licensing of trappers have not required specific education standards for the treatment of animals and methods of trapping, there is very little outreach to serve this purpose. Currently, an exam administered by the CDFG is the sole method of regulation of the knowledge and skill of for-profit trapping. The Vertebrate Pest Council, in cooperation with CDFA and others conducts a series of vertebrate pest control workshops throughout the state. While these are well attended (usually 1000+/yr) they do not reach the

majority of farmers and others who desperately need vertebrate pest control information. Previous vertebrate pest control outreach efforts have been limited due to a lack of trainers. Providing affordable continuing education for growers, trappers and others by means other than attending meetings could provide quality information to vertebrate pest control professionals and the general public who deal with or encounter vertebrate pests at a fraction of the cost of individual meetings. Vertebrate pest control education and outreach for trappers and others involved in vertebrate pest control will have a tremendous positive impact on California agriculture. This training will address the concerns of many Californians about how wildlife is treated during pest control operations and will also improve the success of trapping and other control endeavors, reducing damage done to crops and property by vertebrate pests. Current vertebrate pest management methods in California use an Integrated Pest Management approach or IPM. An essential part of these programs is the use of rodenticide baits such as anticoagulants (chlorophacinone, diphacinone) and zinc phosphide. Each of these is registered for agricultural uses in California and almost 1 million pounds of finished baits are used each year in the State. Proper use of rodenticides is essential since the active ingredients can pose risks to non-target wildlife, pets and children when applied as bait products. The risks are from primary exposure (direct consumption of rodenticide bait) for all compounds; and secondary exposure (consumption of poisoned rodents by predators or scavengers) mostly associated with anticoagulants.

Objectives:

The overall goal of this program was to develop a comprehensive multimedia education and outreach program that provides users with the ability to self educate and self test using an interactive online training program about vertebrate pest control. These materials would be available and appropriate for any individual with interest or need for information on vertebrate pest control. The main objective of this project was to develop various program delivery methods including web based, web broadcast, kiosk based, email managed, in person training, and correspondence course. These training programs were designed with this objective in mind.

Summary:

This project was undertaken to provide a flexible multimedia education and outreach program on vertebrate pest control, including the humane trapping of wildlife in the State of California. The focus of this program was on dealing with vertebrate pests in agricultural settings. The target audience for this concept is the California agricultural industry and the public who are dealing with California ground squirrel, pocket gopher and meadow vole problems. Online users of this training are able to access various learning tools for all three species. Each program consists of interactive training, video learning, a study guide, two section quizzes, and a final exam with an option to obtain 2-hours of Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) Continuing Education Credit for pesticide applicators. The site also has a Facts and Questions section, a YouTube Channel and Podcasts available through the website and iTunes. The training programs are

available to DPR certified pesticide applicators and the general public. All educational content can be added to or amended at any time through internet access. In addition to educating users, the website collects statistical data and some voluntary information from users, i.e. email address and comments. The first training program was officially launched May 1st, 2009 at <http://ucanr.org/vpctraining>. The success and wide availability of internet based training programs demonstrates the potential for broad vertebrate pest control statewide continuing education. The need for specific outreach programs in vertebrate pest control is clear. Previous outreach efforts have been limited because of lack of trainers. This training website provides affordable quality continuing education for growers, trappers, and others who deal with or encounter vertebrate pests.

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