

Black Vulture Control

By Jeff Franklin, University of Kentucky The mAGazine

Last spring, one of Dave Parker's registered Hereford cows was in labor. Suddenly black vultures, large raptor birds with bare black heads and sooty plumage, swooped down to peck out the eyes and nose of the newborn calf as it appeared from the birth canal. The calf couldn't survive the attack, so the Bracken County beef producer had to kill the calf and bury it. He called the problem "detrimental to our livelihood" for Kentucky livestock producers, one they have been facing for several years now from these predacious birds.

"If it is a bull calf and a good animal, you could sell it for a herd bull," Parker said. "You could face a loss between \$5,000 and \$10,000, if these birds kill it."

Adding to the problem is the fact that black vultures are federally protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, preventing farmers from killing the birds. Wanting to create an awareness about the issue, David Appelman, Bracken County extension agent for agriculture and natural resources, says he "stepped out of his comfort area" to do something about the problem.

"It is devastating for our farmers, but through our awareness and encouragement with wildlife officials and legislators, we (Cooperative Extension agents) have gotten a program through Kentucky Farm Bureau that allows our farmers to get a permit through a very streamlined process," Appelman said.



Working with Kentucky's congressional delegation in Washington, and state and federal agencies, KFB funded a statewide bird degradation permit that allows the organization to issue sub-permits to producers, if they meet certain criteria.

"We are doing this right," said Joe Cain, KFB's state commodity coordinator. "We are not just going out and sport-killing vultures. This is a livestock protection issue, it's not about letting someone go and shoot something."

Currently, there are 700 sub-permits available to Kentucky livestock producers. The permits are good through March 2016, and will probably be renewed. Without the permit, anyone killing a black vulture could face a hefty fine and even jail time. Livestock

protection sub-permits are approved on an individual basis for up to five takes of black vultures. Last year, around 175 calves and 10 cows were reported killed by the birds.

Questions

1. What is the main idea of this article?
2. How are vulture attacks affecting livestock producers in Kentucky?
3. From a legal standpoint, why is controlling the vultures an issue?
4. How are the Cooperative Extension Service, Kentucky Farm Bureau, and wildlife agencies approaching this issue?



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