

## STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA CLASS SPECIFICATION

**Class Title: Wildlife Damage Specialist**

**Class Code: 90426**

**Pay Grade: GH**

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### **A. Purpose:**

Wildlife Damage Specialists identify problem wildlife that cause damage to livestock, crops, and property or are a threat to human health and safety; and remove the animals or reduce their ability to cause damage by the most efficient and cost-effective means available to provide a reliable and consistent source of wildlife damage control throughout an assigned geographical area.

### **B. Distinguishing Feature:**

The Wildlife Damage Specialist is responsible for wildlife damage control in an assigned district. The Game, Fish & Parks Program Specialist manages a game, fish, land, or law program in an assigned region.

### **C. Functions:**

*(These are examples only; any one position may not include all of the listed examples nor do the listed examples include all functions which may be found in positions of this class.)*

1. Responds to wildlife damage complaints from landowners, home owners, public land management agency managers, and others and develops a schedule of contacts to ensure the most critical situations are addressed immediately and solutions are provided for lesser problems.
  - a. Determines immediate mitigation alternatives for complaints.
  - b. Prioritizes complaints by evaluating the seriousness of the threats to human safety and livestock safety, and potential damage to crops; and the nature and extent of property damage.
  - c. Develops proactive and reactive work processes to implement the program throughout the region.
  - d. Contacts complainants to perform on-site evaluation of the problems and obtain written permission to work on their property and adjoining property when necessary.
  - e. Provides information and education to complainants on how to resolve less critical animal control issues, furnishes live traps, temporary fencing, hazing devices, and other aids, and explains animal behavior and how to prevent further depredation.
2. Identifies the type of depredation that has occurred and the species involved to evaluate the problem and develop a solution.
  - a. Verifies livestock loss or other property damage and determines the animal causing the problem by reading tracks and sign at the scene and necropsying livestock carcasses.
  - b. Chooses the best methods to remove problem wildlife including traps, snares, controlled pesticides, calling, or shooting.
    - i. Selects most effective location, species-specific set, and bait for traps and snares.
    - ii. Sets equipment to avoid non-target wildlife, livestock, pets, farm equipment, and public scrutiny; and checks it regularly.
    - iii. Maps placement of M-44's with GPS and posts appropriate signs and warnings.

- iv. Chooses proper location and vocalization for predator calling.
  - v. Floats rivers during high-water conditions to shoot problem beaver.
  - vi. Removes beaver dams, may use explosives.
  - c. Initiates innovative tactics for control of depredation.
    - i. Trains and uses decoy dogs to heckle coyotes into gun range.
    - ii. Trains and uses hounds to track and hunt mountain lions.
    - iii. Organizes aerial hunts and may be an aerial gunner.
    - iv. Uses and handles lights and night vision optics to hunt predators at night.
  - d. Advises landowners how to prevent and reduce depredation.
  - e. Documents verified livestock losses and other property damage and numbers and descriptions of problem wildlife removed, and calculates the extent of damage and its monetary value.
3. Acts as the regional contact and coordinator for wildlife damage complaints to ensure effective and timely responses and resolutions.
- a. Contacts area Conservation Officers and landowners to devise and coordinate long-term depredation prevention plans for individual farms and ranches.
  - b. Provides information and training about the wildlife damage program and abatement techniques to region staff and keeps them updated on program changes; and explains and provides guidelines for different depredation management options and contract requirements.
  - c. Manages depredation contracts and keeps records of program activities.
  - d. Performs non-lethal wildlife damage management such as fencing hay or corn stacks, using scare devices, placing feed in strategic locations, etc.
  - e. Verifies and documents that crop losses or other property damage have occurred and determines the animal causing the problem.
  - f. Chooses the best method(s) to remove problem wildlife including shooting, use of hunters or depredation pool hunts, protective netting or fencing, vegetative barriers, alternative food plot feeding sights, hazing, etc.
  - g. Initiates innovative tactics for control of depredation.
  - h. Proactively manages populations of wildlife to lower the potential of depredation.
  - i. Advises landowners on how to prevent and reduce depredation.
4. Meets locally with members of communities, local governments, tribal governments, and federal agencies in a variety of situations to relay information about department programs and establish a network of communication and cooperation.
- a. Meets with ranchers, farmers, public land management agency personnel, other private citizens, and related organizations regarding predator, nuisance, and game animal damage control; instructs them on animal behavior and preventive measures, and informs them about available programs.
  - b. Meets with county commissioners to inform them about depredation control activities in their jurisdictions, and about activities of other department programs.
  - c. Presents department information to the public by writing news articles and participating in radio and television shows, sport shows, and fairs.
  - d. Prepares and presents information about the purpose and methods of wildlife damage control, trapping, calling, and snaring for civic organizations, sportsmen's groups, 4-H clubs, and school classes.
  - e. Attends predator district meetings, livestock organizations' conventions, training, department meetings and in-services, and trappers' conventions.
5. Manages an extensive inventory of equipment, supplies, and vehicles to ensure readiness and capability to meet predator control demands in the district.
- a. Cleans, boils, waxes and dyes steel traps and makes adjustments and repairs; and

- builds and repairs cage traps.
  - b. Cleans and repairs fencing materials and hazing devices and stores them.
  - c. Constructs snares and matrix heads for M-44's and cleans, oils, and stores them.
  - d. Orders and stores bait, lure, and scents.
  - e. Maintains and calibrates when necessary rangefinders, spotting scopes, night vision equipment, GPS units, callers, binoculars, etc.; sights-in rifles, shotguns, and pistols; and purchases and reloads ammunition and stores it properly.
  - f. Schedules or performs preventive maintenance on pickups, ATV's, boats, etc.
  - g. Cares for and trains dogs, maintains kennels, and secures vaccinations and other health care as needed.
6. Performs a variety of fish, wildlife, and habitat management functions to assist in the implementation and delivery of department programs and services.
- a. Tags bobcats taken by hunters and trappers and collects biological information.
  - b. Conducts a variety of wildlife surveys, compiles and maps data, and prepares and sends reports.
  - c. Traps and relocates wildlife.
  - d. Recognizes and reports disease symptoms in wildlife, collects wildlife tissue and blood for testing and monitoring diseases such as chronic wasting disease, rabies, plague, West Nile virus, mange, distemper, parvovirus, anthrax, etc.; follows sample-handling protocols and preservation techniques, and sends samples to the state laboratory.
  - e. Assists with land and habitat management duties on walk-in and game production areas.
  - f. Assists extension agents and other agencies in communicating information about department programs.
  - g. Assists with research and management projects by collecting field data and specimens, testing and reporting on new trapping methods and equipment, etc.
7. Maintains an office and performs administrative tasks in support of assigned functions to comply with program requirements, and to comply with department and state mandates.
- a. Maintains a daily activities log and prepares monthly activity reports documenting work performed such as numbers of complaints, equipment used, animals taken, meetings attended, presentations, extension activities, news releases written.
  - b. Prepares quarterly reports that document individual landowner complaints, livestock or property loss and value, methods used, and animals taken; and prepares annual reports of these activities in their jurisdictions for county commissioners.
  - c. Obtains and maintains landowners' releases which allow access to their property.
  - d. Keeps records on locations of M-44's and cyanide use; and prepares reports to the Department of Agriculture.
  - e. Prepares reports to tribal governments and federal agencies about activities that have taken place on their lands.
  - f. Prepares vehicle and ATV sheets with miles coded to projects, travel vouchers, and time sheets.
  - g. Responds to telephone calls at all hours of the day or night.
8. Performs other work as assigned.

#### **D. Reporting Relationships:**

Reports to a Game, Fish and Parks Program Specialist (Game). Does not supervise but routinely provides training in animal behavior and animal damage prevention and control to citizens.

## **E. Challenges and Problems:**

Challenged to know an assigned district made up of multiple counties and in most cases hundreds of square miles, and the species of wildlife and their habitats in the district well enough to organize, manage, and schedule the time required to equitably meet the wildlife damage control needs of the citizens within that district. This is difficult because it requires a calm demeanor and voice of reason when dealing with landowners who are upset over property losses and are anxious to have quick resolution to the problems; solving wildlife damage problems when neighboring landowners refuse permission to hunt or trap; knowledgeable reading of the signs and identifying problem animals and removing them in a timely and efficient way; keeping equipment operational in poor weather such as rain, snowstorms, ice storms, wind, and extreme cold and heat; checking traps and snares within a specific time from when they were set; safely planning work in proximity to livestock and pets, homes and dwellings, and around towns and parks; determining a monetary value of property loss; working early morning and late-night hours; managing a forty-hour work week to accommodate unusual working hours; working and driving often in adverse weather and environmental conditions; planning to reduce problem animal numbers before losses occur; and dealing with stress from high expectations of the public and failure to resolve all problems because of lack of time. Further challenged to deal with people who have negative views regarding hunting and trapping and to replace misinformation with facts; keep up to date on department seasons, regulations, programs, and policies in order to be able to provide useful and accurate information; and make presentations that are right for the audience and convey the purpose and methods of wildlife damage control in a realistic light.

Problems encountered include keeping a constant and accurate record of daily happenings; returning calls multiple times to try and find people at home; making sure wildlife surveys are done in the appropriate, structured environment; having breakdowns and finding vehicle repair and service in remote areas; giving sportsmen who call and hunt wildlife the first opportunity and still providing effective resolutions to landowners; dealing with the public's concerns and perceptions about predators and overabundant wild animals and teaching them the facts; protecting dogs from over-exertion and heat exhaustion; working with sick and diseased animals; and maintaining M-44 and pesticide certifications.

## **F. Decision-making Authority:**

Decisions include the order and priority of daily contacts to be the most effective in the time available; whether a problem needs immediate resolution or whether preventive methods may be employed; how to approach each situation safely among wildlife, livestock, and people; what species and how many animals are causing the problem and the most appropriate method to use for resolution; the amount of monetary loss of each complaint; the size of area needed to resolve the problem; what equipment to use, where to place it, and what baits to use; whether or not the weather is conducive to the work at hand; where and when to implement proactive plans in the district to reduce problem wildlife and forestall further losses; when and where to conduct field studies; which non-lethal methods to use for wildlife damage management; recommendations to citizens that help reduce or prevent future problems; presentations about wildlife control that are suitable for a wide range of demographics; whether to repair or replace equipment; recommendations to managers for training; and recommendations for budget items.

Decisions referred include authorization of overtime; approval of equipment purchases and major repairs, out-of-state travel, public presentations regarding high profile and sensitive issues, work on federal lands, participation in studies, actions outside normal policy, and

training; priority of aerial hunting among trapper districts; changes in survey protocols; and final authority for action taken on mountain lion issues.

#### **G. Contact with Others:**

Daily contact with landowners regarding depredation and to let them know if something's wrong on their property, e.g., trespassers, livestock stuck in dams, missing livestock found, etc.; and with homeowners regarding nuisance wildlife causing property damage; weekly contact with regional staff to pick up complaints and exchange information about work duties; with Conservation Officers to exchange information they have received about wildlife damage; with sportsmen and the general public to provide information and instruction; and with extension and sheriffs' staff to pick up information about complaints and to help them with surveillance or to find people missing during storms, etc.; monthly contact with highway superintendents, utility officials, and town mayors regarding wildlife damage; with fire departments to guide them around the district during fires and to assist with firefighting; annual official contact with county commissioners to discuss and report on wildlife damage control activities within their jurisdictions; and with predator districts to formulate a maintenance predatory control plan around flocks of sheep and cattle herds; occasional contact with schools and sportsmen's clubs to make presentations; and with media to provide information about wildlife damage control and other department programs.

#### **H. Working Conditions:**

Duties of a Wildlife Damage Specialist involve traveling extensively, often on bad roads and in inclement weather and in remote, rural areas; walking long distances in rough country while carrying packs, traps, and animals and while tracking and hunting animals; operating all terrain vehicles in rough country or around sloughs and in remote areas; working on flood-stage rivers and creeks in boats; setting and checking traps in deep water; climbing on river banks; handling wildlife, dead and alive, and being exposed to disease and injury; working around domestic livestock in a panic because of predators; working with all of the hazards associated with aerial depredation work; working in the dark during early morning and late night hours while predators are out; confronting trespassers; answering and returning phone calls at all times of the day or night; and routinely handling firearms, explosives, sharps, poisons and chemicals.

#### **I. Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:**

Knowledge of:

- animal behavior, wildlife identification, habitat, and types of damage typically related to a species;
- animal diseases and safe-handling practices, disease sampling, collection and preservation methods;
- wildlife damage control methods; trapping equipment and the proper methods of location, bedding, staking, set construction, baiting, and luring; how the environment such as terrain and wind currents affect the work at hand; and erection of fencing and placement of hazing devices;
- firearms including rifles, shotguns, and pistols; ammunition and reloading tools and methods; and safe-storage practices;
- wildlife management practices and survey techniques.

Ability to:

- plan and effectively organize work priorities and requests for services;
- establish and maintain working relationships with individuals, the general public, local government officials, other state agencies, federal and tribal government officials;

- read and identify animals quickly and efficiently from tracks, scat, hair, kill sights, and other signs;
- read, interpret, and implement applicable department, state, and federal laws and regulations;
- act as an intermediary among adjoining landowners who are unwilling to cooperate with each other for the purpose of securing a large enough area on which to practice predatory control effectively;
- balance landowners' expectations for predatory control with the public's expectations for sport and for humane treatment of animals with factual information and education;
- educate and inform people at all levels of knowledge about predators and the objectives of predatory control;
- navigate in rural and remote areas and adapt to changing weather;
- shoot a variety of firearms proficiently in mostly unfavorable conditions;
- use a computer and Microsoft Office programs such as Excel, Access, and Word;
- operate pickups, all terrain vehicles, snowmobiles, boats; and repair and service equipment in the field;
- communicate information clearly and concisely.