

Types of Vultures (cont.)

The latter contributes to damage issues: as a defense, the birds regurgitate a reeking and corrosive vomit. Uric acid in their urine kills bacteria on a bird's legs, but can also be corrosive. Sharp nails and beaks are highly destructive to manmade surfaces.

Black vulture populations have increased in abundance and range in the past 30 years and may continue to do so into the future. Vultures often form large roosts and loafing areas, numbering from a few dozen to hundreds of individual birds. Vultures have an adaptable nature and show complex behavior. Those traits, combined with their increasing populations and closeness to humans, contribute to a wide range of conflicts between vultures and people in agricultural settings, as well as suburban and urban areas. Wildlife Services works closely with farmers, homeowners, state and local governments, and industries to resolve such conflicts.



The turkey vulture (left) is the larger of the two species, weighing about 4 pounds with a 6-foot wingspan. The adult's featherless, bright red head is distinctive, and the body feathers are mostly dark brown/black.

The black vulture (right) weighs less than 4 pounds with a wingspan of less than 5 feet. It is mostly black.

Learn More



United States Department of Agriculture

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Wildlife Services

For more information about managing vulture damage, or other Wildlife Services operations, call your State office at 1-866-4USDA-WS (1-866-487-3297) or visit our website at www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-damage.

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U.S. Department of the Interior

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Migratory Bird Permit Office

For more information on black vultures, migratory bird depredation permits, or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service operations call 612-713-5436 or access the depredation permit application and factsheet at www.fws.gov/forms/3-200-13.pdf.

Managing Black Vulture Damage in Missouri



Know Before You Act

Black vultures are migratory birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, state laws, and regulations. They are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (part of the U.S. Department of the Interior). The birds, their nests, and eggs cannot be killed or destroyed without a Migratory Bird Depredation Permit. For more specific local information, consult with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services staff in Missouri at 1-866-4USDA-WS (1-866-487-3297).

Types of Vultures

Two different vulture species are native to Missouri: black vultures and turkey vultures. These scavengers play an important role in the ecosystem, feeding mostly on carrion, or already-dead animals. The birds' physical features are useful in their role as scavengers: bald heads, sharp beaks, sharp nails, and highly acidic stomach liquids and urine.

Conflicts with People

Property Damage. Large groups of black vultures may roost or occupy woodlots near human habitats and can be destructive. Black vultures often damage homes and commercial buildings by tearing window caulking, roof shingles, vent seals, rubber roof liners, and pool covers. They can damage vehicles by scratching paint, removing rubber seals and wipers, and ripping vinyl seat covers from boats and tractors.

Black vultures also affect quality of life for people. The birds' smelly feces and vomit can accumulate, especially on roofs, communication towers, and electrical transmission structures. On electrical transmission towers, arcing and power outages may occur, at great expense to utility companies.



Agricultural Damage. Black vultures normally feed on animal carcasses. However, they also may attack and kill calves, lambs, piglets, and other weak animals. This predatory behavior often results in serious injury to livestock, because vultures target the eyes and soft tissues. In most cases due to the extent of their injuries, affected domestic animals must be euthanized.



How We Can Help

Black vulture management is complicated and site-specific, so consulting with a wildlife professional is vital to successfully resolving damage.

Wildlife Services staff can help in many ways. It may provide information on habitat management or strategies and tools for dispersing vultures from areas of conflict.

In some cases, Wildlife Services may enter into cooperative service agreements to resolve these conflicts in the field. Wildlife Services also can evaluate the damage and suggest techniques to resolve the specific problem at hand. For example, sound-and-light devices (i.e., propane cannons, pyrotechnics or lasers) may be used to disperse vultures, especially at the roost location as birds return to settle for the night. A correctly positioned vulture effigy, or dummy, will often disperse a roost. Obvious attractants, such as open garbage or livestock carcasses, can be removed or composted, although the source of a site's attraction can be unclear.



In some situations, selective, lethal removal of birds may be needed to resolve damage effectively. Wildlife Services can initiate the depredation permit application process when necessary.

The process:

- Missouri Farm Bureau has been issued a depredation permit by the USFWS and is allowed to issue sub-permits for limited take of black vultures free of charge to producers. Call (573) 893-1416 for assistance.
- If you are not a producer or are facing a situation that cannot be resolved with limited take offered under the sub-permit, please contact USDA APHIS Wildlife Services office at (573) 449-3033 for assistance.
- Permits are valid through March 31 of the following year and must be renewed annually.

Additional Assistance. The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides benefits to livestock producers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality if caused by attacks from avian predators and animals reintroduced into the wild by the Federal Government. LIP payments are equal to 75% of the average fair market value of the livestock. Contact your local FSA office for more information or call (573)-876-0925 or visit <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/Missouri/index>