

Managing Black Vulture Damage – Ohio

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 Ohio at 1-866-4USDA-WS (1-866-487-3297).



Types of Vultures

Two different vulture species are native to Ohio: 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.

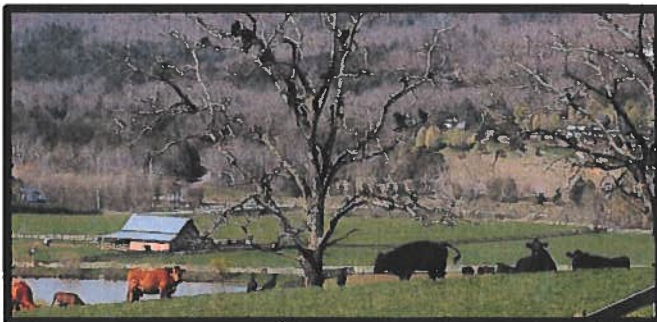
Conflicts with People



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. The Ohio Division of Wildlife (ODW) Livestock Protection Depredation Sub-Permit program under the jurisdiction of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is carried out in coordination with the United States Department of Agriculture/Animal Plant Health Inspection Service-Wildlife Services (USDA WS). Wildlife Services can initiate the sub-permit process, when necessary, free of charge.

- Contact Wildlife Services at 1-866-4USDA-WS (1-866-487-3297). A Wildlife Biologist will provide management recommendations, review the need for removal, and issue producers a letter of authorization allowing lethal take.
- Producers will be required to adhere to all conditions and record take.

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. For more information visit [Disaster Assistance Programs \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov/programs/disaster-assistance-programs) and select the "Livestock Indemnity Program" link. To locate your FSA County office visit [Ohio State Office \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov/county-offices) and select the "County Offices" link.

Learn More

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 Web site at [USDA APHIS | Wildlife Damage](https://www.usda.gov/aphis/wildlife-damage).

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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 web site at [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service ePermits \(servicenowservices.com\)](https://www.usda.gov/aphis/wildlife-damage).



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.





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USDA announces 2022 black vulture permit process

FEBRUARY 23, 2022 – COLUMBUS, OH – The black vulture population has increased in Ohio in recent years. These birds often prey on young livestock, causing injury and sometimes death, creating major economic losses for some livestock producers.

As migratory birds, black vultures are federally protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, state laws and regulations, which means they can't be killed or destroyed without a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) Migratory Bird Depredation permit. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) has obtained a statewide depredation permit for black vultures from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). ODNR will work with USDA Wildlife Services to issue sub-permits to livestock producers who are experiencing issues with black vultures. These sub-permits cover commercial livestock, including cattle, horses, sheep, goats, and swine and are free to livestock producers.

Black vultures, which have a dark gray head and can be aggressive, should not be confused with the larger, less aggressive red-headed, turkey vulture. Turkey vultures are found throughout Ohio, whereas black vultures have historically lived in southern regions but are expanding their range further north. While black vultures can be extremely detrimental to livestock producers, these birds remain important to conservation and agriculture resources by cleaning up animal carcasses from the ecosystem.

Approved applicants will be allowed to remove up to five birds, which will be determined after consultation with USDA Wildlife Services. Applicants must agree to follow all rules and regulations required by USFWS in the ODNR statewide permit. A livestock producer with a permit is encouraged to use the "taken" black vulture as an effigy, a non-lethal method to prevent future depredation issues.

Interested livestock producers may request a sub-permit application by contacting Thomas Butler at thomas.p.butler@usda.gov.

