

Board Inquiry Form

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Inquiry Number: 21

Department: Agricultural Commissioner & Public Health
 Date: 6/10/13
 Page(s) of Budget Book:

Request/Question: Under the current contract with USFWS, who is available to remove live wild animals (e.g. skunks, possums, etc.) from private property in the unincorporated areas of county? After the contract is ended, who?
 Under the current contract with USFWS, who comes out to remove dead wild animals from private property? From right of ways? After the contract is ended, who does?

Response Prepared by: Cathy Fisher, Agricultural Commissioner and Jan Glick, Animal Services Director

Under the current contract with USFWS, who is available to remove live wild animals (e.g. skunks, possums, etc.) from private property in the unincorporated areas of the county?

Answer: The current contract with USFWS includes services for abatement of nuisance wildlife incidences (opossums, raccoons, skunks, various birds, etc.) in an urban setting which consists of wildlife specialists providing the technical expertise for property owners to mitigate nuisance wildlife problems through non-lethal means. Wildlife specialists instruct the property owners how to modify the environment around the affected area to solve the problem. In some cases the animal will be removed by trapping. These problem animals are humanely euthanized as it is a violation of state law to relocate them without specific authorization from CA Fish and Wildlife. The reasons for the prohibition are biologically based and supported by national fish and wildlife agencies.

Animal Services does not remove healthy, live wild animals. Animal Control Officers respond to wild animal cases when there is a rabies, animal welfare or public safety concern. This includes calls regarding suffering, ill or injured animals or safety risks to humans such as wildlife inside of the home.

Animal Services staff does not respond to nuisance wildlife complaints. They will assist residents with information and educational materials to understand the reasons wildlife are attracted to their property and changing the environment to remove those attractants. Trapping and removing the animal without changing the habitat to remove what is attracting them will not resolve the problem as other animals will soon come to take its place.

It is not possible for Animal Services to respond to wildlife service calls other than those related to rabies, animal welfare or public safety concerns with current staff resources. Animal Services staff is not equipped, trained, or staffed to perform trapping on the wide range of animals the USFWS wildlife specialists handle and in fact, they refer residents who call with such concerns to the USFWS wildlife specialists.

Other resources to assist residents with wildlife complaints are local volunteer wildlife rescue organizations such as The Santa Barbara Wildlife Care Network and the Wildlife Information, Literature, Data and Education Service (WILDES).

After the contract is ended?

Answer: Property owners may contact the agriculture department for referral to a variety of resources, such as, the UCIPM website that provides information on integrated pest management options (including exclusion techniques), for vertebrate pest control. The homeowner may choose to remove the nuisance wildlife causing the damage by trapping however this leaves the homeowner with a live animal to deal with. This may lead to the homeowner relocating the animal to nearby open space which is illegal, inhumane and biologically unsound. The other option is homeowners may hire a licensed vertebrate pest control business to assist with the nuisance wildlife incident. Pest control businesses must register with the agriculture department every year. The department can provide contact information of all registered vertebrate pest companies for homeowners.

The reduction of funding to the contract in FY 13-14 will result in a reduction of staffing from 2 to 1.3 FTE. At present, Wildlife Services receives 1,500 calls per year requesting assistance with urban wildlife.

Under the current USFWS contract, who comes out to respond to dead wild animals from private property?

Answer: the current USFW contract does not provide this service.

After the contract is ended, who does?

Answer: Animal Services responds to calls to remove dead wildlife on private and public property, except for state highways and other thoroughfares under the authority of Caltrans.