

Black Vulture Damage

The black vulture is a separate species from the turkey vulture, which is more recognizable because of its prominent red head. Black vultures appear smaller than turkey vultures and have shorter wings, with white tips underneath their wings while in flight. Black vultures are at the northern edge of their range here in Ohio, and their range within the state appears to be spreading. They have been found as far north as Coshocton County. Black vultures have been reported killing and injuring piglets, lambs, and more rarely, calves and cows giving birth. Ewes during lambing are particularly vulnerable to harassment or predation by black vultures. If you suspect vulture predation on your herd, signs to look for include missing eyes, tongue, or anus. These three body parts are usually the first eaten by black vultures. Because of a different beak type for turkey vultures, they are usually only able to feed on carcasses with exposed surfaces, such as road-killed animals found along the highway

If you see black vultures on or near your farm, keep a close eye on where they are roosting, especially at dawn and dusk. To discourage these birds, knowing their habits and roost sites is very helpful. Here's a few things to keep in mind:

- Understanding the biology of the animal/bird causing problems.
- Removing or properly composting any carcasses on the farm.
- Habitat modification- vultures prefer large dead trees for roosting. Removing these snags where possible means vultures must fly longer distances to reach the area having problems.
- Exclusion- use of netting, or porcupine wire in roosting areas to discourage use by vultures.
- Harassment- use of pyrotechnics in conjunction with other techniques is beneficial (Fairfield SWCD has these devices for use by county residents).
- One technique that has proven to be nearly 99% effective in repelling black vultures is hanging an "effigy" or dead vulture from a tree near roosting sites. **However, a landowner must have a permit from USDA's Wildlife Services to take a live vulture.** A good, safe, legal substitute is a single Tyvek goose decoy from Cabela's, (800-237-4444), a mail order outfitting store. The price is less than \$30.00.

What if these techniques are used and vultures are still a problem? All vultures are federally protected, so shooting them may be done only with Federal approval. At this point USDA Wildlife Services can assist the landowner in obtaining a permit to remove the vultures. These permits are only issued through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office in Minneapolis. Because this process can take 2 to 4 weeks to complete, contact Chip Lovell with Wildlife Services at 614-892-2514 as soon as vulture problems occur.