

Standards for lethal response to problem urban wildlife

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DOI: 10.1080/10871209809359137

Publication Frequency: 6 issues per year

Published in:  [Human Dimensions of Wildlife](#), Volume [3](#), Issue [4](#) Winter 1998 , pages 29 - 48

Formats available: PDF (English)

Abstract

Managers face limited options when dealing with problems created by urban wildlife. Destroying an animal that is perceived to be a nuisance is sometimes acceptable; at other times destroying the animal may be controversial. This paper uses the structural norm approach to develop standards for an agency's use of lethal response to problem urban wildlife. The paper describes three structural characteristics of public wildlife management norms (range of acceptable situations, norm intensity, and norm agreement) and shows how these standards may be affected by different situational contexts (impact severity) and different animal species. Three wildlife species (beavers, coyotes, and mountain lions) are examined across a continuum of situation contexts ranging from seeing wildlife in a residential area to an animal killing a person. For all three species, acceptability of destroying the animal increased as the impact severity of the human-wildlife interaction increased. For identical situations, however, acceptability of destroying an animal varied by species. Overall, the normative approach can effectively clarify the positions of constituents on wildlife management decisions for specific contexts and animal species. Such information can decrease the risk of public controversy generated by general broad-based wildlife management policies.

Keywords: norms; standards; coyote; beaver; mountain lion; wildlife management