



2012 Kentucky Farm Bureau Agricultural Contact Team (FBACT)

Black Vulture Predation

March 20, 2012

ACTION ALERT:

ISSUE: Turkey and Black Vultures provide a valuable service to the ecology by efficiently dealing with wildlife carcasses in the environment, but it can become problematic when vultures become predatory. Across Kentucky the Black Vulture has been confirmed as preying on young animals such as newborn calves. Several cattle producers in Kentucky have reported losses to Black Vultures, ranging from single, newborn calves to multiple newborn calves. As we begin spring calving season, producers need to monitor black vulture roosts and patterns around their herds. There have been no reports of Turkey Vulture predation.

The two species of vulture are very similar in appearance but can be easily identified. The Turkey Vulture has a reddish, featherless head, while the Black Vulture is more dark grey to black. The wingtips of the Black Vulture also have a white patch on the underside of the wing's edge.

IMPACT: Losses to livestock are mounting and producers need an option to protect young animals from predation. However, both vulture species are protected under the Migratory Bird Act of 1912 and international treaty, and the killing of vultures without a federal permit, even when livestock is being killed, is unlawful. Many livestock producers have contacted local Fish and Wildlife officials seeking assistance in preventing Black Vulture predation and have been told there is a process U.S. Fish and Wildlife wants followed. That process involves applying for and purchasing a permit through USDA's Wildlife Services. The cost for a depredation permit is \$50 for individual permits and \$100 for an association or company permit, and it generally takes about 48 hours to process once the information is completed. Producers can contact USDA's Wildlife Services in Kentucky by calling (502) 582-5536 to request a Migratory Bird Depredation Permit application.

Congressional offices have voiced concerns with U.S. Fish and Wildlife about predation from Black Vultures and the need for a more simple and effective approach for protecting livestock. However, Fish and Wildlife biologists insist the use of trapping, roost dispersal and occasional "takes" of individual vultures will work.

ACTION: Congressional offices have requested information relative to livestock losses that are attributed to Black Vulture predation. Producers experiencing losses should always thoroughly document livestock losses noting the date of loss, location, number of animals and reason. When Black Vulture predation is the reason for loss, producers are encouraged to photograph the scene clearly showing the vultures as well as photographing Black Vulture roosts in the area. Producers are encouraged to make predation loss documentation and photographs available to Joe Cain,

Director of National Affairs and Political Education at Kentucky Farm Bureau. Collected information will then be made available to members of the Kentucky Congressional delegation and appropriate federal agencies.

Producers needing more information on the identification and habits of the Black Vulture, or those seeking more information pertaining to acquiring depredation permits, should visit the Kentucky Farm Bureau Action Alert website at kyfb.com.

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