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## Proceedings of the Vertebrate Pest Conference

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# Conference Chair's Remarks – Twenty-Eighth Vertebrate Pest Conference

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As Chair of the 28<sup>th</sup> Vertebrate Pest Conference, it is my honor to thank you for your support and attendance, and to welcome you to the conference. A lot happened during this conference and there are so many people to thank for making it successful. Before I thank the dozens of people and organizations who contributed their time and money to the conference, let me begin by describing the broad scope of this event.

## Conference Agenda

The conference opened with the Keynote Speaker, Dr. Charles Eason from Lincoln University and Cawthron Institute, with a retrospective and prospective look at global trends in mammalian pest control technologies. Dr. Larry Clark, USDA Wildlife Services National Wildlife Research Center, presented an insightful talk on the role new advances in genetic technologies could play in the development of more targeted and humane wildlife damage management tools. The plenary was rounded out with presentations by Dan Tompkins, Predator Free New Zealand, on the ambitious goal of ridding New Zealand of invasive predators by the year 2050, and a talk by Margaret Pepper, USDA Wildlife Services, summarizing and outlining Wildlife Services' approach and success to eradicate invasive nutria from the Chesapeake Bay.

The conference was organized into five concurrent ½-day sessions with 40 presentations structured around the topics of general human-wildlife conflicts, wild pigs, field rodents, and bird control. Three full-day special symposia, each with 16 presentations, were organized around current topics in our field, 'Living with Wolves', 'Commensal Rodents,' and 'Rodenticide Residues in Wildlife.' There were 10 posters presented at this conference. Prior to the start of the conference, 63 people participated in a full-day field trip to Sonoma and Mendocino Counties that highlighted current local wildlife issues. Field trip stops included discussions of bird and mammal management in the wine industry (Pedroncelli Winery and Gallo Family Vineyards), management of predators and feral swine, and landscape effects of illegal marijuana grows.

## Conference Attendance Statistics

The 28<sup>th</sup> VPC was attended by 286 wildlife professionals. Thirteen international conference attendees came from seven countries including Australia, Canada, Finland, France, New Zealand, Norway, United Kingdom, and the United States. U.S.- based attendees came from 26 states, of which 182 attendees were based in California. Seventeen participants registered the day of the conference, most of whom were attending to obtain Certified Pesticide Applicator continuing education credits. Thirteen participants in the conference registered as students.

## Education Summary

Educational aspects of the Vertebrate Pest Conference are key to developing future human-wildlife conflict professionals and the training opportunities for maintain accreditation of professional Certified Pesticide Applicators. This year the Vertebrate Pest Council was able to fund eleven \$500 student travel grants, and student travelers participated in both the oral presentation and poster sessions.

The VPC Continuing Education Committee and the Pesticide Applicators Professional Association did an exceptional job again this year working with two California departments making the arrangement so that conference attendees could receive as many as 37 continuing education training hours. Because of the quality of the presentations at this conference, we were able to provide two Category L and 26 Category O credits through the California Department of Pesticide Regulation, and nine Category D credits through the California Department of Health. I hope conference attendees took full advantage of this opportunity.

## Water E. "Howdy" Lifetime Achievement Award

The Vertebrate Pest Council was pleased to announce the formation of the Walter E. "Howdy" Howard Lifetime Achievement Award. This award has been established to acknowledge the tremendous lifetime contributions of individuals in the Vertebrate Pest Management profession. Recipients must have made significant contribution to our profession in at least one of the following areas:

- Advancement or development of management tools used to minimize damage or conflict caused by vertebrate pests, with a special emphasis on environmentally safe methodologies.

- Advancement in undergraduate and graduate education in vertebrate pest management and associated disciplines.
- Implementation of effective and innovative outreach efforts focused on the safest, most efficacious, and most cost-effective strategies for vertebrate pest management; targeted groups could include agency personnel, pest control professionals, and private citizens.
- Effective fostering of education and research programs on vertebrate pest management.
- Effective oversight of large management or regulatory programs designed to coordinate vertebrate pest management activities among regulatory agencies, non-governmental organizations, and/or private citizens.
- Any other area associated with research, education, and management of damage or conflict caused by vertebrate pests that showcases excellence at the highest level.

The award was awarded to two people this inaugural year, Rex E. Marsh and Robert M. Timm. Biographical narratives of Walter E. Howard, Rex E. Marsh and Robert M. Timm are found on page *vii* of the printed copy of this volume. Congratulations to Rex and Bob, and a special thank-you to Howdy, for his unwavering and ardent promotion of our profession and the Vertebrate Pest Conference.

### **Thank-You to Sponsors and Vendors**

I especially want to thank the sponsors and vendors who supported the conference this year. Your participation not only helps us support this event financially, but your presence and participation rounds out the conference experience. I know many of you are regulars at the VPC and we hope you continue to attend. First time supporters, I hope you found the experience worthwhile and will continue to attend and support the conference. This year three companies were Gold Level Sponsors – BurrowRX/VM Products, Xcluder, and Liphatech Inc. Two companies were Silver Level Sponsors – Motomco Ltd., and Inert Gas Injection, LLC. Eight companies supported vendor tables – BurrowRX/VM Products, Inert Gas Injection LLC, Liphatech Inc., Motomco Ltd., Tomahawk LiveTrap, The Berryman Institute, RCO International, and Xcluder. I hope to see you at the VPC in 2020.

### **Thank-You to Volunteers and Cooperators**

I would like to thank the dozens of people who helped make this conference a success. Those include the Vertebrate Pest Conference organizing committee, comprised primarily of VP Council members. This dedicated group of individuals contributed countless hours preparing the field trip, conference agenda, sponsorship and vendor arrangements, and facilities arrangements. I would also like to acknowledge their agencies and organizations for allowing them to participate on the VP Council.

I would like to thank the Pesticide Applicators Professional Organization (PAPA) for handling the conference registration and continuing education arrangements. I also want to thank the California Department of Health and California Department of Pesticide Regulation for working the VP Council to ensure attendees had the ability to earn as many Continuing Education credits as possible.

I heard rave reviews of the field trip this year. It could not have happened without the participation of the two vineyards we visited (Pedroncelli Winery and Gallo Vineyards) and the staff/presenters of the University of California Hopland Research and Education Center, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, University of California-Davis, University of California Cooperative Extension, USDA California Wildlife Services, and Wildlife Control Technologies.

The Rohnert Park Chamber of Commerce provided information on local sites, events, and restaurant opportunities and arranged discounts at local establishments for conference attendees. In addition, hopefully you noticed a full-page advertisement in the Preliminary Program announcing the National Wildlife Control Operator Association's Basic Wildlife Control Operator training that immediately followed our conference, in the same facility. This is the first time in many years that our two organizations co-advertised each other's events. I hope it proves to be the beginning of a closer relationship between our organizations.

### **2020 Vertebrate Pest Conference**

Finally, the next (29<sup>th</sup>) Vertebrate Pest Conference will be held Santa Barbara, California in February 2020. Stella McMillin, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, will be the Council Chair during the next two years and will lead the planning and execution for the 2020 conference. I am certain Stella and the VP Council will organize a fantastic conference. You won't want to miss it.

Thanks you for attending the 28<sup>th</sup> Vertebrate Pest Conference. See you in Santa Barbara in two years.