

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 18, 2022

Martha Williams
Principal Deputy Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Department of the Interior
1849 C. Street, NW, MIB Rm. 3148
Washington, DC 20204

Dear Director Williams,

With nearly 25,000 farms and 4.7 million acres of farmland, South Carolina is driven by agriculture. Agribusiness (agriculture plus forestry) is the state's number one industry, accounting for over 246,000 jobs and over \$46 billion in annual economic impact. While South Carolina agriculture may be best known for its peaches and cotton, its livestock production is the cornerstone of this state's economic engine with poultry and cattle being three of the top ten commodities produced in South Carolina.

However, the South Carolina livestock industry is under attack not from any manmade issues but rather from black vultures. As you know, these specific vultures may attack young and vulnerable livestock, especially newborn calves, resulting in losses for our farmers and producers. While these vultures may typically attack the young and even newborns during birthing, they will regularly attack all ages of livestock through pecking causing flesh wounds, disembowelment, plucking creating loss of organs and limbs, and often killing the livestock entirely. These attacks are not only harmful to the livestock themselves but causes unnecessary losses for all our producers.

To combat this growing threat and provide substantive relief to producers, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Wildlife Services (WS) partnered with US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in a multi-state black vulture damage management program in 2020, specifically in Arkansas, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, and South Carolina. This Management Assistance Project (MAP) was designed to run concurrently with, and enhance, the ongoing research component of the overall WS black vulture management strategy. While our producers appreciate the assistance of WS, it is an uphill battle protecting livestock from these predators due to the current permit process in place.

Often, producers witness these attacks occurring as they check their livestock and requiring them to seek a permit before they can act to protect their property, only exacerbates the losses they experience as more attacks occur during the time in which it takes to obtain the necessary permits. We respectfully request that USFWS consider issuing a depredation order on a state-by-state basis and grant one for South Carolina. This will help save the lives of the livestock and the livelihoods of the producers.

Sincerely,



Lindsey O. Graham
United States Senator



Tim Scott
United States Senator



Ralph Norman
Member of Congress



Joe Wilson
Member of Congress



Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress



Tom Rice
Member of Congress



William R. Timmons, IV
Member of Congress



Nancy Mace
Member of Congress