

*News Release*

## **Wildlife damage on farms is significant and on the rise**

Guelph (May 13, 2009) Over the last 10 years, wildlife damage costs to Ontario crops and livestock have increased by almost 20%. In fact, researchers at the George Morris Centre believe that number is likely a conservative estimate.

In an update to the 2000 report, 'Wildlife Impact Assessment for Ontario Agriculture', commissioned by the Ontario Soil and Crop Association (OSCIA), loss rates for crops and livestock from 1998 were revised, based on currently available data, for the period 2005 - 2007.

According to Al Mussell, senior research associate and lead author of the report, "our goal was to update the work done in 2000 on the cost of wildlife damage to crops and livestock in Ontario, based on more recent conditions. Our results showed that wildlife damage costs had increased by about 20% since 1998, even with the exclusion of effects from new wildlife species, and with a very compact list of field and horticultural crops impacted. We can quantify losses of about \$41 million per year, but the true value of wildlife damage is apt to be significantly higher."

The OSCIA is hopeful these study results will encourage dialogue among policy makers. OSCIA president Murray Cochrane stresses the importance of establishing wildlife damage prevention measures and compensation packages for Ontario farmers. "There are some good opportunities now available to producers that provide reasonable cost share for implementing measures to control problems. However, it is clear that more needs to be done to assist those who are experiencing significant and frequent crop and livestock losses attributed to wildlife. Meaningful solutions can surely be found if all parties agree to work together", says Cochrane.

The updated study includes options for mitigating losses due to wildlife damage, and concludes that wildlife damage and the attempts to prevent it affect farmers, taxpayers, consumers and wildlife conservation groups alike. Therefore, the responsibility for assessing costs and determining solutions should be shared by farm organizations, wildlife conservation groups and government.

The economic update is available through the George Morris Centre, [www.georgemorris.org](http://www.georgemorris.org) and the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association, [www.ontariosoilcrop.org](http://www.ontariosoilcrop.org).

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For more information on the economic study, please contact Al Mussell at the George Morris Centre, 519-822-3929 ext. 209 or [al@georgemorris.org](mailto:al@georgemorris.org).

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