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**Testimony of Kenneth S. Junkert, Administrative Services Director
North Dakota Department of Agriculture
Status of Contract Relating to Wildlife Services
Budget Section, Senate Chamber
1:20 p.m., September 15, 2011**

Chairman Grindberg and members of the Budget Section, I am Ken Junkert, the Administrative Services Division Director for the North Dakota Department of Agriculture (Department).

Pursuant to a request by Chairman Grindberg, on behalf of the Budget Section, I am here today to provide a status report regarding the Department's contract with the United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Wildlife Services (WS).

The Department has consulted with the North Dakota Attorney General's Office, the North Dakota State Auditor's Office, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, and the Office of Management and Budget in preparation of the service contract for 2011-2013 biennium. The Department is currently negotiating the final provisions for the service contract, and we anticipate that the contract will be executed in the next ten business days.

In order to ensure more accountability and efficiency of service delivery, the Department included the following new provisions in the contract and cooperative agreement:

1. The State has never required WS to provide services based on a priority rating system.

The new contract requires WS to classify each service request with a priority rating of 1, 2, or 3. A "1," or High, priority involves either an imminent threat to human health and safety or to natural resources, or a high economic impact to individual interests. A "2," or Medium, priority involves an emerging threat to human health and safety or to natural resources, or a medium economic impact to individual interests. A "3," or Low, priority involves no threat to human health and safety or to natural resources, but involves low or no economic impact to individual interests. WS will be required to provide service to all "1" or High rated requests for services before directing state funded responses to requests rated as "2" or "3."

2. The previous contract reimbursed WS for salaries for a specific number of wildlife field specialists and a pilot. WS misinterpreted the previous contract to mean that the state was responsible for all of the WS field staff salaries and benefits. The new contract requires WS to bill for services. Reimbursable service expenses will be limited and proportionate to salaries and benefits and operating costs for the time WS personnel conduct allowable services. The state makes no dedication to support WS personnel at any specific staffing level.
3. The previous contract provided compensation based on the state fiscal year. The new contract establishes a maximum reimbursement per quarter. This very important contract provision will ensure that funding is available to provide services for the entire 24-month period of the 2011-2013 biennium.
4. The previous contract required annual reporting. In order to ensure more frequent accountability, WS will now be required to submit quarterly reports. More frequent reporting will provide the state with the ability to make contract adjustments to best

match the needs in field to the available budget resources. The quarterly reports will include the following:

- a. Number of individuals assisted.
 - b. Description of individual issue and/or resource losses.
 - c. Number of services completed by priority ranking.
 - d. Number and species of animals taken by method.
 - e. Estimate of financial damages individuals suffered due to wildlife damage.
 - f. Detailed report of services covered by federal funds and other funding sources.
5. The previous contract didn't include any Department of Agriculture audit provisions. The new contract indicates that all records relevant to the contract are subject to examination by the Agriculture Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee and the North Dakota State Auditor or the Auditor's designee. The Department anticipates conducting annual audits.
6. The previous cooperative service agreement and contract did not include any customer service survey provisions. The Department is planning to work with the North Dakota Agriculture Statistics Service to conduct a customer satisfaction survey. This survey will be an invaluable tool in gauging agriculture producers' and other service users' satisfaction with WS service delivery.

Chairman Grindberg and members of the Budget Section, the Department feels that the changes to the new WS contract will provide more accountability and efficiency. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding the Department's pending contract with WS.