



Fauquier High School

705 Waterloo Road
Warrenton, Virginia 20186

Annex Office

(540) 422-7306

Attendance/Finance

(540) 422-7309 (540) 422-7310

Main Office

(540) 422-7300

Fax # (540) 422-7325

Counseling Office

(540) 422-7307

Library

(540) 422-7320

Robert Glascock, Assistant Principal

Dr. David Ferguson, Principal

Colleen Robson, Assistant Principal

Diana Story, Assistant Principal

December 16, 2024

Dear Warrenton Town Council,

The purpose of this correspondence is in support of the recommendations of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) to use two effigies to help with the growing issue of the vultures at the Tripp Bopp Farm at Fauquier High School (FHS). Our teacher, Mrs. Susan Hilleary, has received contacts from constituents around the community with their concerns about the vultures at FHS. She has sought out solutions and the most effective recommendation from the USDA is the use of the effigies. She has provided a copy of the correspondence with the USDA scientist outlining this solution. She also has documented the nuisance in her letter to you dated on 12/14/24.

I respectfully ask that you allow the use of this solution at no cost to the town, FHS will incur the costs associated with the effigies, so we can have a safe working space for our students and our livestock on the farm.

If you decline this option, I ask that you please work with FHS and Fauquier County Public Schools to provide a solution that is safe and meets your standards.

If you have any questions I may be reached at (540) 422-7301 or via email at David.Ferguson@fcps1.org.

I look forward to your response and our current partnership.

Regards,

Dr. David Ferguson
Principal



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12/14/2024

To Warrenton Town Council:

The Fauquier High School Agriculture Department requests permission from the Warrenton Town Council to have the USDA, Animal Plant Health Investigation Service (APHIS) hang two



Figure 1 - Black vultures congregating around livestock

black vulture effigies on the school campus to disperse the groups (committees) of vultures that congregate around the farm most mornings. The effigies are to be hung over the pig pens where the vultures congregate and harass the pigs. There are typically over 100 vultures in the committee that hangs around the school farm, ball fields, and buildings. The vultures carry coliform bacteria that present a health risk for both the animals on the school farm and the students who care for them. Additionally, they carry the risk of avian flu which is a potential hazard for the school livestock

and vultures are predators of young animals. Black vultures are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918 and there are few legal ways to disperse them. The USDA biologist responsible for agriculture-livestock conflicts in this area recommends either chasing them away by making loud noises whenever they appear or hanging effigies; however, the constant monitoring for noise making is not feasible during or outside of school hours. Hanging effigies is proven effective, complies with the requirements of the MBTA, and is conducted by USDA staff biologists. Also, the presence of the effigies is an important learning opportunity for school students and faculty who are learning about management of human, wildlife, and livestock conflicts.



(Image source: USDA APHIS Wildlife Services)

Figure 2 - Effigy hanging in tree



Figure 3 Vulture feces on farm equipment

The effigies will not be a public nuisance, unlike the committee of vultures who roost here daily. The pen and roosting sites are not visible from outside the campus and the effigies will be in the trees over the pen. The wildlife biologist confirms that the smell of the decaying effigy is minimal. The vultures on the other hand are an extreme nuisance. The school receives calls from concerned members of the community at least once a week about vultures in and around the school farm animals. The vultures deposit feces on the gates, fences, storage containers, and shelters for the animals which students have to touch to care for the animals.



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Please see the attached statement from Dr. David Ferguson, principal FHS, the email communication from the USDA wildlife biologist and the zoning staff, and a fact sheet on using effigies to deter vultures. Thank you for your consideration and assistance to resolve this issue.



Figure 4 – Proposed location of effigies

Sincerely,

Susan Hilleary

Susan Hilleary
Agriculture Department
Fauquier High School



Managing Vulture Damage

Vultures play an important role in our ecosystem, feeding mostly on carrion (flesh of dead animals). But as their populations have increased in size and range over the last 30 years, so have conflicts between vultures and people. If you're having problems with vultures, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Wildlife Services can provide information and advice or work onsite to help reduce damage and resolve conflicts.

Vulture management is complicated and site-specific. Consulting with a wildlife professional is vital to successfully resolving damage.

Know Before You Act

Vultures are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, State laws, and regulations. They are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (part of the U.S. Department of the Interior) and State wildlife agencies. The birds, their nests, and eggs cannot be killed or destroyed without a Migratory Bird Depredation Permit. Individual States and localities may have further restrictions on vulture management. For specific local information, contact your State Wildlife Services office by calling 1-866-4USDA-WS (866-487-3297).

Types of Vultures

Black and turkey vultures are native to North America. They have bald heads, sharp beaks and nails, and highly acidic stomach liquids and urine. They often form large roosts and loafing areas, numbering from a few dozen to hundreds of birds. Vultures are adaptable and show complex behavior. These features make them excellent scavengers but can also cause damage to property and lead to conflicts with people in agricultural, suburban, and urban settings.



The turkey vulture (left) is the larger of the two species, weighing about 4 pounds with a 6-foot wingspan. The adult has a featherless, bright red head and mostly dark brown/black body feathers. The black vulture (right) weighs less than 4 pounds with a wingspan of less than 5 feet. It is mostly black with a gray head.

Damage Caused by Vultures

Property Damage. Large groups of vultures can roost or occupy woodlots near homes and be destructive. Black vultures often damage buildings by tearing window caulking, roof shingles, vent seals, rubber roof liners, and pool covers. They can damage vehicles by scratching paint, removing rubber seals and wipers, and ripping vinyl seat covers from boats and tractors.

Both black and turkey vultures also affect the quality of life for area residents. The birds' feces and vomit can accumulate, especially on roofs of houses and office buildings, communication towers, and electrical transmission structures. This can lead to arcing and power outages, at great expense to utility companies. It can also hamper maintenance activities around communications towers, impacting the longevity of these structures.

Agricultural Damage. Both turkey and black vultures normally feed on animal carcasses. Black vultures, however, may also attack and kill calves, lambs, piglets, adult animals during birthing, and other weak animals.

This predatory behavior often results in serious injury or death to livestock, as vultures target the eyes and soft tissues. In most cases, affected animals must be

euthanized because of their injuries. A 2017 USDA report on cattle and calf losses in the United States reported that vultures were responsible for 10 percent of all calves lost to predators. Before allowing cell towers on their lands, ranchers should be aware that vultures commonly roost on cell or satellite towers.

Health and Safety Concerns. Accumulations of feces, as well as vulture roosting and soaring behaviors, create health and safety concerns. Droppings near homes and drinking water sources may pose health concerns for individuals and municipalities. Many people find the white-wash stains of vulture droppings and their associated ammonia odors offensive. Additionally, concentrated vulture populations can be hazardous to aircraft, especially when close to airport flight paths, because of the birds' large size and characteristic soaring behavior. This behavior increases their chances of being struck by low-flying aircraft.

How We Can Help

Vulture management is complicated and site-specific. Consulting with a wildlife professional is vital to successfully resolving damage. Our Wildlife Services staff can help in many ways. This may include giving information on habitat management or strategies and tools for dispersing vultures from areas of conflict. Our biologists can document vulture damage and start the depredation permit application process when necessary. In some cases, we may enter into cooperative service agreements to resolve these conflicts.

We can also evaluate the damage situation and recommend possible techniques for resolving specific problems. For example, a vulture effigy, hung correctly, may scatter a roost. Sound- and light- devices (i.e., propane cannons or pyrotechnics and lasers) may also be used to disperse vultures, especially at roost locations at night or as birds return to settle for the night. Motion-activated sprinklers and inflatable air dancers may be useful for dispersing vultures from rooftops. We can help you identify and remove or



Vultures have an adaptable nature and show complex behavior. Combined with increasing populations, this leads to a wide range of conflicts.

avoid potential attractants, such as open garbage, dead livestock, and outdoor feeding of domestic or wild animals. In some situations, selective, lethal removal of birds may be needed to resolve damage effectively.

Our recommendations are based in science. Wildlife Services' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts research on a wide variety of wildlife damage issues. Scientists at NWRC's Florida field station carry out studies to better understand vulture populations, ecology, and behavior to develop strategies that help minimize property damage, protect agriculture, and relieve health and safety concerns caused by vultures.

Learn More

For more information about managing vulture damage or other Wildlife Services operations, call your State office at 1-866-4USDA-WS (1-866-487-3297) or go to www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-damage.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Wildlife Services is not the only source of wildlife damage management services available to the public. Private-sector wildlife damage management providers may also be available. Wildlife Services does not endorse or recommend any specific private-sector provider or the use of any specific product over another.

From: [Dawson, Daniel - MRP-APHIS](#)
To: [Hilleary, Susan](#)
Subject: RE: vultures
Date: Monday, December 2, 2024 11:31:57 AM

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It will probably be close to 400.00 for hanging two effigies. The expense is just time associated with travel getting the effigies and performing the work of hanging them. These effigies would be two dead vultures from other projects. They typically will last about a month before degrading which is usually ample time for the problem vultures to disperse.

From: Hilleary, Susan <shilleary@FCPS1.ORG>
Sent: Monday, December 2, 2024 11:20 AM
To: Dawson, Daniel - MRP-APHIS <daniel.dawson@usda.gov>
Subject: Re: vultures

How much does it cost?

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From: Dawson, Daniel - MRP-APHIS <daniel.dawson@usda.gov>
Sent: Monday, December 2, 2024 11:02:18 AM
To: Hilleary, Susan <shilleary@FCPS1.ORG>
Subject: RE: vultures

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I can hang a vulture effigy which almost always works to keep them away but there is a fee associated with the service. Is there someone I should discuss payment options with? I know some schools have a contract person that takes care of those things. If this is not something that you wish to pursue, you can always try harassing them by going near them and making loud noises such as banging together pans or other loud objects. This will have to be done repeatedly until they give up coming to the area. Hanging an effigy is the best option but I will let you discuss with others first.

Thanks
Dan

From: Hilleary, Susan <shilleary@FCPS1.ORG>
Sent: Monday, December 2, 2024 10:55 AM
To: Dawson, Daniel - MRP-APHIS <daniel.dawson@usda.gov>

Subject: Re: vultures

Thanks for getting back with me. This is for both dispersal and a talk with my students about appropriate methods.

Thanks,
Susan

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From: Dawson, Daniel - MRP-APHIS <daniel.dawson@usda.gov>

Sent: Monday, December 2, 2024 10:33:01 AM

To: Hilleary, Susan <shilleary@FCPS1.ORG>

Subject: vultures

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Good morning, I am the wildlife specialist for this area and received an email regarding vultures harassing livestock. Did you require assistance with dispersal or was it just for a presentation/talk?

Thanks

Daniel Dawson
Wildlife Specialist
USDA APHIS Wildlife Services
540-642-3047

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From: [Heather Jenkins](#)
To: [Hilleary, Susan](#)
Subject: RE: Vulture Dispersal at Fauquier High School
Date: Wednesday, December 11, 2024 1:27:47 PM

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Susan,

I discussed the vulture dispersal issue with staff here at Town Hall. There is a strong preference to use a method other than hanging the dead vultures, as this could pose a public nuisance due to potential for odor and objectionable views. However, if hanging vultures in effigy is the only workable method, then this would need to be submitted to Town Council for approval. To pursue this method, you will need to provide a letter of request that details the proposed method and duration. This request would be presented to Town Council at their next available public meeting.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you,
Heather

Heather E. Jenkins, PLA, CZA
Zoning Administrator
Community Development Department



21 Main Street
Warrenton, VA 20186
(540) 347-1101 x144
warrentonva.gov

The Town Zoning Ordinance is being revised – stay up to date here:
<https://www.warrentonzoningordinanceupdate.com>.

From: Dawson, Daniel - MRP-APHIS daniel.dawson@usda.gov
Sent: Thursday, December 5, 2024 10:24 AM
To: Heather Jenkins hjenkins@warrentonva.gov
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL: Suspicious Link]FW: Vulture Dispersal at Fauquier High School

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] DO NOT CLICK links or attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good morning. We frequently use effigies at schools with no known issues. Of course we would ask that students not be around them. Looking at the photos it appears that there are some trees nearby and tentatively that is where they would be hung about 15 feet off the ground. They typically last about a month or so before degrading. The smell is minimal. They usually work very well and almost immediately. Another option you have is just constant harassment by making loud noises around the vultures when they are out there. This has to be done repeatedly until they do not want to be in the area. Banging something like pots and pan's together is something that folks commonly do.

Dan

Daniel Dawson
USDA Wildlife Services
Virginia
540-642-3047

From: Hilleary, Susan <shilleary@FCPS1.ORG>
Sent: Thursday, December 5, 2024 9:02 AM
To: Heather Jenkins <hjenkins@warrentonva.gov>
Subject: RE: Vulture Dispersal at Fauquier High School

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The dispersal that the USDA recommends is for an urban/suburban environment so there is no noise or pyrotechnics. The effigies are dead vultures that have been collected by the biologists through other projects. Vultures are protected species and only the government agencies have access to dead vulture bodies. Apparently live vultures are offended and will not return to where their brethren are hanging dead. The biologist says they hang in the roosting trees for about 4 to 6 weeks, then fall apart and decompose.

The biologist for our area is Daniel Dawson. His email is daniel.dawson@usda.gov if you have more specific questions for him.

Thanks for your quick reply!

Susan

From: Heather Jenkins <hjenkins@warrentonva.gov>
Sent: Thursday, December 5, 2024 8:16 AM
To: Hilleary, Susan <shilleary@FCPS1.ORG>
Subject: RE: Vulture Dispersal at Fauquier High School

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Good morning, Susan. To make sure that I can connect you with the right person, could you provide some more information on what the dispersal activities would entail? Would this include fireworks, noise, etc.? I am also curious about the effigies you mention below. Thank you,
Heather

Heather E. Jenkins, PLA, CZA
Zoning Administrator
Community Development Department



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Warrenton, VA 20186
(540) 347-1101 x144
warrentonva.gov

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From: Hilleary, Susan <shilleary@FCPS1.ORG>
Sent: Wednesday, December 4, 2024 5:34 PM
To: Heather Jenkins <hjenkins@warrentonva.gov>
Subject: Vulture Dispersal at Fauquier High School

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Hello Ms. Jenkins,

I am the agriculture teacher at Fauquier High School and we are trying to resolve a problem with hundreds of black vultures roosting in and around the animal pens at the school farm. (Please see the attached photos). I receive emails and phone calls from the public almost daily concerning them. I have contacted the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and the USDA APHIS service. The USDA APHIS has a biologist who is the individual who has the authority to legally harass the vultures to disperse them. He can come to our campus and hand effigies of vultures.

I have provided this information to the school principal and to the FCPS building and grounds committee. They told me that I have to get authorization for this process from the Town. Tim Ohlwiler at VCE, recommended that I contact you and perhaps you can point me in the right direction.

Thanks in advance for any assistance.

Susan

Susan Hilleary
Agriculture Teacher
Fauquier High School
(540) 422-7300

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