



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Marketing and
Regulatory
Programs

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Airfield Wildlife Hazard Assessment and Management Report

Project Overview & Timeline

In the summer of 2025, Ann Arbor Municipal Airport (ARB/KARB) requested assistance from United States Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services (WS) to mitigate wildlife hazards on the airfield. An initial site visit was conducted to define the scope of work and evaluate land utilization by the target species.

The airfield features several environmental components—including woodlots, drainage ditches, agricultural zones, and tall grass—that provide an ideal year-round habitat for white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, coyotes, small mammals, and various bird species.

Routine site visits began in October 2025 to July 2026 to actively address these known aviation hazards:

- **Initial Mitigation:** Two deer were successfully removed from the airfield during night operations.
- **Infrastructure Assessment:** Following this removal, a thorough evaluation of the perimeter fence was completed. The airfield is enclosed by a chain-link security fence ranging from eight to ten feet in height. While effective for airport security, it does not currently serve as a reliable wildlife deterrent. White-tailed deer, coyotes, red foxes, and small mammals can readily breach the perimeter due to existing gaps, holes, dig-unders, fallen trees, open culverts, and overgrown vegetation



Habitat and Environmental Observations

Several key geographical and environmental features across the property naturally invite wildlife activity:

- **Drainage and Wetlands:** Poor drainage has created pooling water and wetland conditions, primarily on the southeast and southwest sides of the property. These areas attract and support a significant population of waterfowl and wading birds.



- **Cover and Movement Corridors:** Wood lines running along drainage ditches, scattered pockets of timber, and areas of overgrown brush allow wildlife to move across the airfield undetected.



- **Fallow Grasslands:** The fallow grass currently growing in areas previously dedicated to agriculture provides both a food source and cover for various species. The current grass height in these areas is significant.



Actionable Recommendations

To enhance airfield safety and systematically reduce the presence of hazardous wildlife, we recommend implementing the following land management, habitat modification, and exclusion strategies:

1. Grass Management

Maintaining managed long grass at a height of 6 to 12 inches is a highly effective, natural deterrent for Canada geese and European starlings, as both species prefer foraging in shorter grass. Additionally, keeping the grass within this specific range minimizes hidden cover for larger birds and small mammals without creating a habitat for other pests.

- **Action Item:** Implement a routine mowing schedule to strictly maintain this 6-to-12-inch height. Frequent mowing prevents flowering and seed formation, successfully eliminating a primary food resource that would otherwise attract foraging flocks.

2. Elimination of Volatile Trees and Shrubs

Early successional habitats—consisting of dense herbaceous vegetation, shrubs, young trees, and briars—should be entirely cleared from the active airfield environment.

- **Action Item:** Remove these brushy pockets to strip away essential food and protective cover for hazardous mammals like deer, coyotes, and foxes. Clearing this vegetation also significantly improves line-of-sight visibility, making it much easier for airfield staff to detect and respond to wildlife.

3. Wetland and Surface Water Management

Standing water is a major attractant for avian hazards and must be managed to prevent wildlife from establishing a presence on the property.

- **Action Item:** Target low-lying areas characterized by poor drainage. These spots should be systematically drained, backfilled, and integrated with drain tiles to properly disperse water and eliminate standing pools.

4. Perimeter Exclusion Upgrades

Because the current perimeter fence and gates do not effectively deter white-tailed deer or burrowing mammals, upgrading this physical barrier is critical for long-term operational control.

- **Action Item (High Priority):** Prioritize repairing the existing fence line and gates to eliminate all current gaps, holes, and structural breaks. Additionally, establish and maintain a strict 10-foot clear zone between any trees and the fence line. Applying effective herbicide along the fence line is highly recommended to eradicate weeds down to the root and maintain clear visibility.
- **Action Item (Burrowing Prevention):** To stop wildlife from digging beneath the perimeter or exploiting gaps caused by soil washouts, upgrade the fence to include an underground wire skirting. This skirting should be buried at a 45-degree angle facing outward to create a secure, dig-proof barrier.

Target Species Priority Overview

The following list identifies the high-priority species currently subject to active hazing or removal operations. While this represents our immediate focus, we are actively monitoring additional species and will expand our mitigation efforts to address them moving forward.

Species	Lethal	Non-lethal	Dispersed
White-tailed deer	4		4
Canada Geese	4		105
Mallard Duck			15
Coyote			2
Wild Turkey	22		296
Mourning Dove	14		
Raccoon	1		