

## RESOLUTION # 9

### WILDLIFE AND AGRICULTURE

1           **WHEREAS**, excessive populations of wildlife, and the accompanying economic and  
2 natural resource losses to farmers, livestock owners, homeowners, businesses and public  
3 lands caused by such wildlife populations, continue at critical levels in New Jersey; and

4           **WHEREAS**, widespread development in New Jersey has led black bear, geese,  
5 starlings, turkeys and other birds, as well as small mammals, to retreat to the relatively open  
6 spaces of New Jersey farmland and its appurtenant woodlands, infiltrating and feeding upon  
7 the crops farmers depend upon for their livelihood and that residents depend upon for fresh,  
8 nutritious, locally grown and produced foods, and risking the introduction of diseases  
9 common to wildlife into the domestic animal population and to humans; and

10           **WHEREAS**, while most farmers report at least some crop damage by deer annually,  
11 a third of farmers recently studied by the New Jersey Farm Bureau and Rutgers NJAES  
12 reported at least \$10,000 in annual crop damage from wildlife, and five percent reported  
13 \$50,000 or more in annual wildlife crop damage; and

14           **WHEREAS**, the burgeoning black bear population, in particular, poses a threat to  
15 crops, smaller agricultural animals such as sheep, goats and chickens - as well as to New  
16 Jersey beekeepers' honeybee colonies that are vital to pollinating many of New Jersey's  
17 leading produce crops and which account for a growing fresh honey supply - and these  
18 bears have increasingly come into contact with humans in residential areas, with multiple  
19 bear-human encounters reported over the past several years; and

20           **WHEREAS**, in an attempt to curb the black bear population, the New Jersey  
21 Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife in 2015 expanded the  
22 state's annual bear hunt to include additional areas and the use of bows and arrows; and

23           **WHEREAS**, multiple bills in the Legislature have sought to end the annual bear hunt  
24 and replace it with "non-lethal" methods of limiting human-bear interaction such as requiring  
25 the use of "bear-resistant" trash cans and prohibiting the feeding of bears by residents; and

26           **WHEREAS**, the Governor has issued an executive order banning bear hunting on  
27 state-owned lands, many of which abut the private lands of farmers; and

28           **WHEREAS**, the 1999 Report to the Governor on Deer Management in New Jersey  
29 and the 2005 adoption of the Comprehensive Black Bear Management Strategy call for using  
30 hunting, among other methods, as a tool to manage wildlife populations; and

31           **WHEREAS**, baiting, for wildlife, is an important tool to properly and safely control  
32 hunting efforts in New Jersey, since residential and open-space areas often are in close  
33 proximity; and

34           **WHEREAS**, the sale of corn, sweet potatoes, apples and other farm products  
35 provides a strong revenue source for farmers and retailers; and

36           **WHEREAS**, the use of snares is an important tool, especially for farmers seeking to  
37 control wildlife to prevent crop and property loss; and

38           **WHEREAS**, pending legislation would prohibit the use of “enclosed foothold traps,”  
39 which the legislation’s sponsors say are “inconsistent with plain language and legislative  
40 intent of a 1984 law banning animal traps of steel-jaw leghold type...”; and

41           **WHEREAS**, the number of permits for beaver trapping is limited by statute to 200  
42 permits per year for the entire state, which is significantly less than what is known to be  
43 needed to manage the beaver population; and

44           **WHEREAS**, beaver depredation permits that are issued often carry restrictions that  
45 make them, for all practical purposes, useless to farmers trying to control the damage done  
46 by beavers; and

47           **WHEREAS**, all agencies of state government involved in wildlife management must  
48 examine the need for greater control of the black vulture population in the state, as in the  
49 past year, black vulture interaction with other birds was a major contributing factor to the  
50 occurrence of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) at several “backyard flocks” and one  
51 animal rehabilitation center/sanctuary in New Jersey; and

52           **WHEREAS**, those same agencies, especially the NJDA, should investigate the  
53 potential for creating a registration system for “backyard flocks” in New Jersey, as they are

54 often likely to see their owned birds exposed to wild birds that could carry HPAI, and a lack  
55 of registration makes it difficult to ensure the Department is protecting all premises near a  
56 detection of HPAI in order to limit the spread of the devastating disease; and:

57 **WHEREAS**, the deer-farming industry has been strong in Europe, New Zealand and  
58 Canada for years, and is growing rapidly in the United States; and

59 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey deer farmers need state support to protect the health and  
60 well-being of livestock entering the food supply, through disease-control programs, humane  
61 standards for care, and surveillance and response for diseases that impact their animals;  
62 and

63 **WHEREAS**, a comprehensive, long-term, multi-species wildlife-management plan,  
64 including times when the farmer's crops are in the field and when they are not, with a permit  
65 worded accordingly, would greatly help New Jersey's farmers plan for a consistent, goal-  
66 oriented management of wildlife that can cause damage to crops; and

67 **WHEREAS**, the Director of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, working  
68 within the framework of the Fish and Game Council, which includes farmers among its  
69 membership, can determine wildlife policy in the state.

70 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 108<sup>th</sup> State  
71 Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 8-9, 2023, do  
72 hereby strongly urge that the Governor, the Legislature, the New Jersey Fish and Game  
73 Council and/or the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife and/or all other appropriate state,  
74 federal, and local agencies to effectuate the following:

- 75 1. Work with USDA-APHIS and the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife as  
76 appropriate to expand black bird and starling control programs in New Jersey, and  
77 to work to limit interaction between kept birds and wild birds such as black vultures,  
78 which this past year contributed greatly to instances of HPAI in New Jersey  
79 backyard flocks.
- 80 2. Continue to work with the U.S. Department of the Interior, Division of Migratory  
81 Birds, and the Atlantic Flyways Council to extend the statewide resident Canada

82                   goose season to the maximum extent possible, not to interfere with migratory birds,  
83                   and increase the daily bag limit and to encourage greater control strategies for  
84                   Canada geese and snow geese.

85           3.   Increase the number of available turkey hunting permits and conduct and/or support  
86           extramural research on turkey damage.

87           4.   Support the expansion of wildlife damage surveys and plans for New Jersey, as well  
88           as wildlife damage research and education at the Rutgers/NJAES.

89           5.   New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife stop the practice of pulling a depredation  
90           permit if the carcass of a shot animal covered by that permit cannot be found.

91           6.   Continue to support a science-based black bear management methodology that  
92           incorporates hunting seasons as needed.

93           7.   Support the continued development and use of a multi-species depredation permit  
94           to streamline the process of obtaining such permits for farmers facing crop damage  
95           from multiple species, instead of requiring separate depredation permits for each  
96           species causing damage.

97           8.   Increase the number of trapping permits for beaver and remove restrictions on  
98           depredation permits that hamper their proper implementation.

99           9.   Allow “baiting” with corn, apples and other produce for the hunting of deer and  
100           bear, as it both helps to improve the safety of hunting in areas near residential  
101           development and provides a revenue source for farmers and food retailers.

102           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly urge the Division of Fish and Wildlife to  
103           permit farmers to establish comprehensive, long-term, multi-species wildlife-management  
104           plans, including times when the farmer’s crops are in the field and when they are not, and  
105           issue a permit worded accordingly.

106           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we oppose any legislation, executive order or  
107           regulation that would remove hunting as a method of controlling the state’s black bear  
108           population, especially those that expressly characterize bear hunting as “trophy hunting,”

109 thus showing a lack of understanding of the need to hunt bear to prevent crop and livestock  
110 damage, and insist that the Governor consult state wildlife biologists in addressing bear  
111 management.

112 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly urge the passage by the Legislature  
113 and the signing by the Governor of legislation to move the administration of the New Jersey  
114 deer farming industry from the Division of Fish and Wildlife to the New Jersey Department of  
115 Agriculture.

116 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly urge the Governor and Legislature to  
117 support legislation that calls for moving the New Jersey Fish and Game Council and the  
118 Division of Fish and Wildlife into the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, creating a more  
119 logical alignment with USDA and its myriad of wildlife programs, and thus resulting in a  
120 better-coordinated effort to balance the needs of wildlife with those of the agricultural sector,  
121 provided that all concerns about such a realignment are addressed through a combined  
122 effort of the NJDA and NJDEP, with an eye toward accomplishing the missions of both  
123 departments.

124 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly urge that the farmer members of the  
125 New Jersey Fish and Game Council, nominated by the delegates to this convention, be  
126 expeditiously appointed to that Council, as some nominated farmer members have waited  
127 years for their appointments to become effective.

128 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that regardless of the alignment of the agencies, that  
129 the current Director of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife meet with a group of  
130 farmers and agricultural advocates designated by the State Board of Agriculture to discuss  
131 ongoing issues regarding wildlife's impact on agriculture in New Jersey by June 30, 2023.

132 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly urge the Legislature to reject any  
133 legislation that would prohibit the use of snares as a means of controlling wildlife in New  
134 Jersey.

135 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly urge that New Jersey's  
136 Congressional Delegation sponsor and support federal legislation to increase, by at least

137 \$400,000, the USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services budget for staffing and support for a pilot  
138 Cooperative Waterfowl Damage Management Program in New Jersey, and to implement  
139 actions in support of the "Depredation Order at Agricultural Facilities" contained in the  
140 Environmental Impact Statement for Canada Geese.

141 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly urge the Division of Fish and Wildlife  
142 to broaden the allowed use of crossbows for use in hunting under a depredation permit, and  
143 strongly urge the Division of Fish and Wildlife explore the simplification of depredation  
144 permits and opportunities for sportsmen to be added to permits at any time, and for  
145 depredation reporting to be done with the automated check-in system to reduce farmer  
146 reporting.