

FEATURE – USDA WORKING TO PREVENT BIRD-PLANE COLLISIONS

INTRO: Birds can cause a lot of damage to airplanes and, in some cases, endanger pilots' and passengers' lives. The USDA's Bob Ellison has more on what's being done to address this problem.

BIRDS MAY HIT AIRPLANES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES BETWEEN EIGHT TO TEN THOUSAND TIMES THIS YEAR. THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE IS WORKING WITH AIRPORTS TO REDUCE THESE ACCIDENTS, WHICH CAN ENDANGER PEOPLE'S LIVES.

Michael Begier, USDA APHIS : A lot of people don't realize that even a very small bird that weighs just a few ounces, less than a pound, can impact an aircraft and when an aircraft is traveling at a high rate of speed the bird can damage the aircraft.

BEGIER SAYS WHILE KILLING THE BIRDS IS AN OPTION IN THE INTEREST OF PUBLIC SAFETY, U-S-D-A PREFERS TO WORK WITH AIRPORTS AND AIRBASES TO MAKE AREAS LESS BIRD FRIENDLY.

Begier, USDA APHIS : Maybe there is a different type of grass that is growing at the airport that's providing food for wildlife and the biologists at USDA may recommend to change that grass.

SCARING BIRDS IS ALSO AN OPTION.

Begier, USDA APHIS : These are firework type devices that create loud, explosion-type noises that can scare wildlife. There's whistling type sounds. There's also pyrotechnics that sparkle and throw off sparks and that frightens the wildlife to get off of the runway.

BEGIER SAYS U-S-D-A'S EFFORTS SEEM TO BE HELPING TO REDUCE BIRDSTRIKES.

Begier, USDA APHIS : The number of damaging strikes has actually gone down over the last decade. It was much higher in the early nineties and it seems to be going down now.

Bob Ellison USDA: USDA assisted close to nine hundred airports across the U-S last year in dealing with wildlife threats to aviation. In Washington D-C for the U-S Department of Agriculture, I'm Bob Ellison