

Columns

The Director's desk

Why this journal was created

JOHAN T. DU TOIT, Co-Director, Jack H. Berryman Institute (West), Department of Wildland Resources, Utah State University, Logan, UT, USA 84322-5230

THE PUBLICATION of this second issue of *Human–Wildlife Conflicts* is something of a triumph, not only because it reflects the continued support of the journal by contributing authors, but also because it confirms the journal's ability to survive through lean times. The Jack H. Berryman Institute is dependent on Congressionally directed federal funding passed through USDA/APHIS/Wildlife Services, but that was disrupted by the power shift that occurred in the U.S. Congress in January. The resolution of Congress to withhold approval of most spending bills until presentation of the fiscal 2008 budget later this year meant that the Berryman Institute's fiscal 2007 budget did not get passed through to us. That crisis forced our 2 units (BI-West at Utah State University and BI-East at Mississippi State University) to effectively shut down until an interim plan could be made. Thankfully, we have strongly supportive colleagues in Wildlife Services who "passed around the hat" within their own agency and whittled from their own budgets to provide us with the baseline funding we need for the bare essentials, such as the publication of this issue. Our deep appreciation goes to Bill Clay and everyone else in Wildlife Services for their impressive display of support for the Jack H. Berryman Institute.

This issue of *Human–Wildlife Conflicts* has a special focus on the management of feral hogs that throws into relief the distinction between domestic animals and wildlife. The term *wildlife* can be applied with considerable latitude, but the definitive feature of a wildlife population is that it is composed of free-ranging individuals that survive and breed in the wild. So, ever since the early sixteenth century, when the first domesticated hogs (*Sus scrofa*) presumably escaped from the pens of their



Johan T. du Toit

Spanish colonist owners in what is now Florida, this remarkably adaptable omnivore has been firmly embedded in the North American assemblage of wildlife species. Although they cannot withstand harsh winters, feral hogs have proved to be extremely successful invaders of ecosystems ranging from wetlands to deserts. Their success in the United States is inadvertently aided by humans, who (1) control the predators, competitors, pathogens, and parasites of livestock and (2) produce surplus food of the types that hogs need to flourish. By comparison, in Africa where I was working before coming to Utah State University, the living is not nearly as easy for feral hogs, and their distribution is limited to a few forested habitats.

The case of feral hogs exemplifies the paradoxical nature of conflicts between humans and wildlife that develop because of close associations with animals that are otherwise highly beneficial to humans. Another example is the domestic poultry industry, which provides the incubator for the avian influenza A (H5N1) virus that is dangerous to humans and can be spread by wildfowl. As economies grow and agriculture intensifies, it is to be expected that such conflicts will proliferate unless they are effectively controlled through innovations in science, technology, and management. But such innovations are ineffective unless they are publicized among practitioners at the human–wildlife interface, which is why the Jack H. Berryman Institute publishes *Human–Wildlife Conflicts*. I congratulate the editorial team and thank the authors and referees for their contributions to this issue; the journal is off to a galloping start. Now, if we could only get those feral hogs to gallop away. *