



# **Benton County Agriculture and Wildlife Protection Program 2024 Annual Report**



***If you build it, they will come.***

*The Corvallis Waldorf School built a new chicken coop and purchased electric poultry netting. Shortly after construction was completed, a yellow chicken showed up in a nearby sunflower patch and integrated herself into the flock. Sunflower can be seen in the background with her feathered friends.*

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# Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	1
1. Executive Summary.....	2
Introduction .....	2
Education and Outreach .....	2
Grant Program Results .....	3
GRANT PROGRAM TIMELINE – REGULAR CYCLE.....	3
2. Purpose and Structure .....	5
3. Program Goals.....	6
5. Education and Outreach .....	6
6. Grant Program .....	6
2024 Program Results .....	6
2024 Awards .....	7
7. Resources.....	10
7.1 Websites.....	10
7.2 Books.....	10
7.4 Scientific Journals.....	10
Appendix I: Past Award Summaries .....	12
Appendix II: Recipient Feedback about the AWPP .....	15
Appendix III. ‘AWPP in a Nutshell’ .....	16

# 1. Executive Summary

## Introduction

In June 2023, the Benton County Budget Committee approved \$47,475 to fund the Agriculture and Wildlife Protection Program (AWPP) for the 2023-25 biennium. The Benton County AWPP began as a pilot program in 2017 and is a one-of-a-kind community grant program through which any size of agricultural operation in the County can create a project plan to implement non-lethal deterrents such as fencing, livestock guardian animals, and animal housing to prevent and mitigate conflicts with wildlife as an alternative to lethal control methods. This program provides an alternative to lethal trapping and removal of predators and beaver by USDA Wildlife Services, but the AWPP works collaboratively with USDA, ODFW, Chintimini Wildlife Center and other local management and conservation organizations to provide comprehensive resources and information to farmers.

The AWPP has a competitive annual grant cycle in which Benton County residents can apply for funds from October 1-November 30<sup>th</sup>. To address the issue of predation or wildlife interactions that occur outside of the regular grant cycle, an emergency grant option exists where residents experiencing ongoing or recent (60 days or less) losses can apply for immediate approval and subsequent reimbursement after project implementation. This option was added in 2023 due to increased interest in the program and increased reports of depredation on poultry and livestock throughout the County.

This report summarizes program activities for 2024.

### In 2024, of the allotted funds:

- **\$28,915 was awarded through 10 reimbursable grants** to Benton County Farmers to protect livestock and prevent conflicts with wildlife.
- **Of the grants awarded, five were emergency grants** awarded to address ongoing or recent livestock or crop loss.
- **Three of the completed emergency grants** were awarded to members of the community of Alsea, where a series of cougar depredations on goats and sheep occurred in fall 2024.
- **One grant was awarded to the Corvallis Waldorf School**, which allowed for the building of a chicken coop and electric poultry netting to enhance agricultural education and community outreach about non-lethal deterrence.

Successful applicants are required to keep annual project records, report conflicts with wildlife, evaluate their project, and abide by program requirements for three years following the completion of their project.

### This annual report summarizes:

- (1) Programmatic updates,
- (2) A summary of data from all past awarded grants, and
- (3) The awarding and status of 2024 grants.

## Education and Outreach

Activities in the last twelve months have included several outreach efforts:

1. In August 2024, the AWPP had a static booth at the **Benton County Fair & Rodeo**.

2. Program Coordinator Shea Steingass attended a **community meeting in Alsea** regarding cougar depredations along with staff from ODFW, USDA, and independent trappers.
3. AWPP tabled at the **OSU Extension Small Farms Conference** in February 2025.
4. We continue to maintain and enhance a "[Lending Library](#)" to give county residents the opportunity to try non-lethal deterrent devices and materials before purchasing them for themselves.

## Grant Program Results

In 2024, the AWPP awarded **\$28,915 to 10 Benton County farms** for non-lethal wildlife deterrence projects, which consisted of six emergency grants and five regular cycle grants (one emergency grant did not complete their project due to extenuating circumstances.) While successful applicants have been historically awarded the full amount of request (up to \$5,000), in an effort to distribute funds to more farms, only one applicant received the full \$5,000 in 2024. In total there were 12 applicants for grants and 11 were awarded based on scoring and recommendations of the grant committee.

### GRANT PROGRAM TIMELINE – REGULAR CYCLE

<b>January 31</b>	Annual evaluation reports due for past recipients
<b>Oct 1 – Nov 30</b>	General grant application window opens
<b>Nov 30</b>	General grant applications due
<b>Dec 1 – 31</b>	Grant Review Committee reviews grant applications
<b>Jan 1</b>	General grant awards announced
<b>Jan – Apr</b>	General grant project implementation period for awardees
<b>Mar – Apr</b>	AWPP Coordinator <b>onsite visits</b> to verify eligibility for reimbursement
<b>May – Jun</b>	Reimbursement period

### Growing Program Interest

Increased outreach efforts starting in 2022 have resulted in more interest in the program over time. The number of farms applying in 2023 was nearly double that of previous years. The maximum number of grant requests prior to 2023 was nine annually. The AWPP received a total of 30 applications between 2023-2024 inclusive (18 in 2023, 12 in 2024) which represents a significant uptick in interest in the program overall.

In addition, a series of cougar-related depredations on livestock in the communities of Alsea during 2024 resulted in enhanced community interest in the program. Six of the 2024 awards were given to Alsea residents and three were given to residents of Monmouth, two communities who experienced upticks in cougar interactions in the last calendar year.

Feedback for this program has been overwhelmingly positive; however it is possible that increased competition and subsequent decreased applicant success over time may result in less interested applicants if current trends continue.

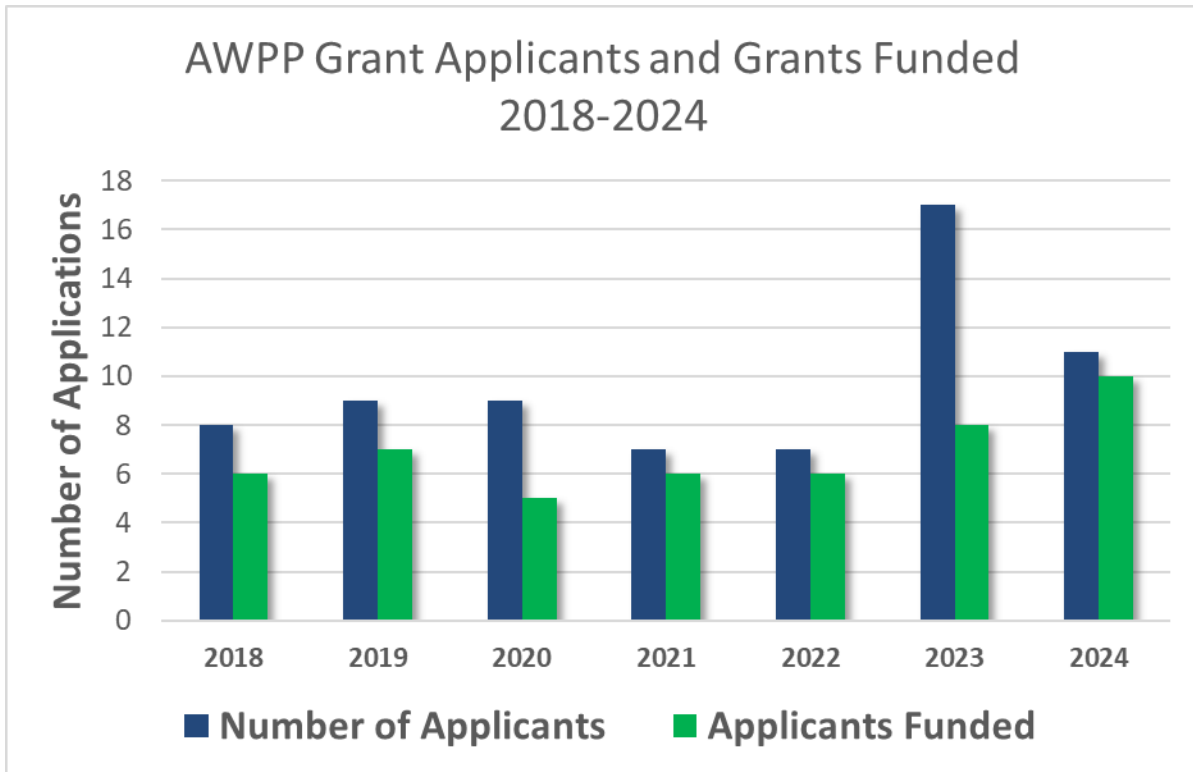


Figure 1. Total number of grant applicants and applications funded 2018-2024.

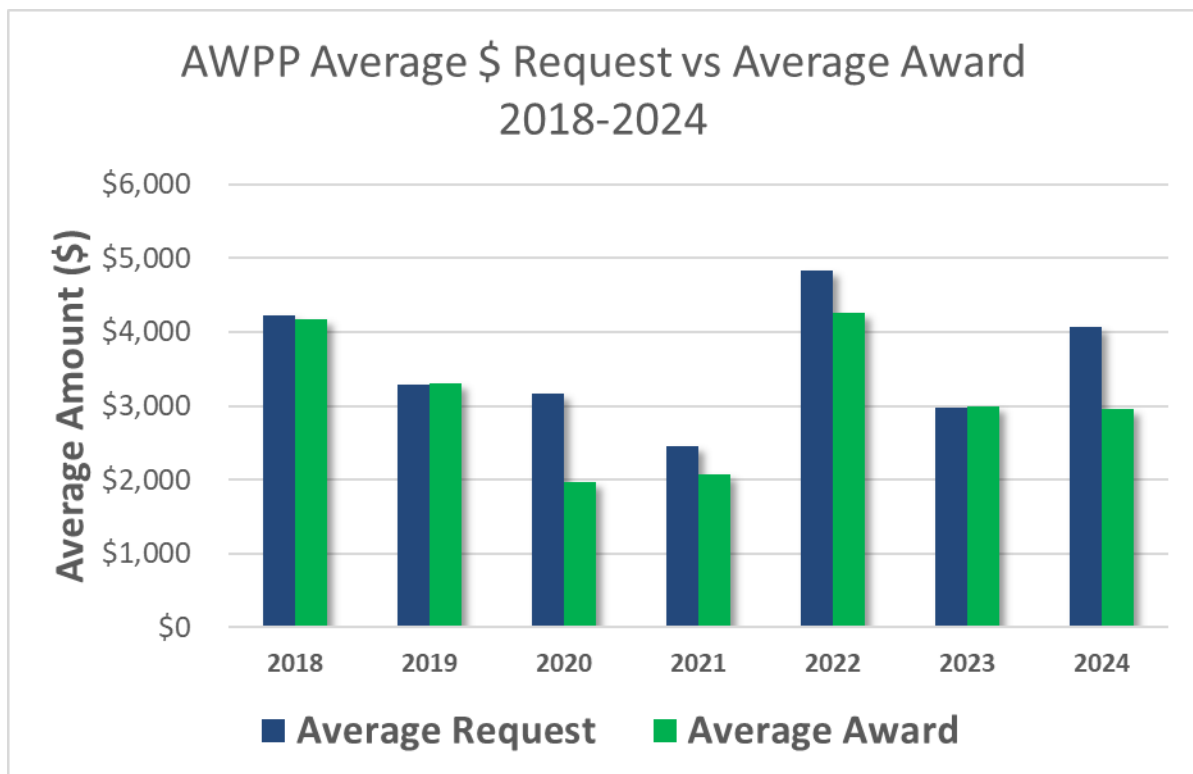
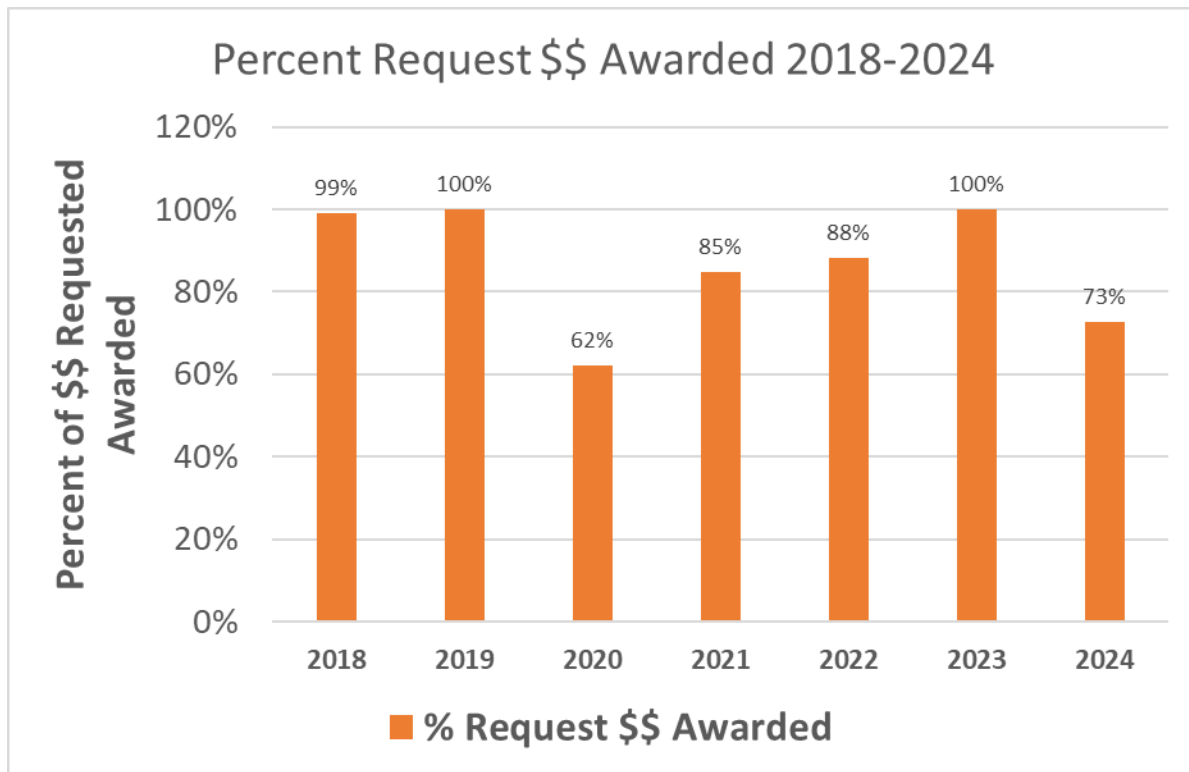


Figure 2. Average grant request in dollars by year along with dollar amount awarded.



*Figure 3. Percent of requested funds distributed. In 2023, only 47% of applicants were awarded but they were funded at 100% of request. In an effort to spread funds more widely in 2024, the Grant Committee elected to award 91% of applicants, but at an average of 73% of original funding request.*

## 2. Purpose and Structure

The purpose of the Agriculture and Wildlife Protection Program (AWPP) is to provide: (1) a merit-based, cost share, competitive reimbursement grant program for Benton County farms and (2) educational outreach and expert consultation services around non-lethal wildlife deterrence for Benton County residents.

Agricultural operations in Benton County that wish to prevent conflicts with wildlife may qualify to be reimbursed for the purchase and installation of approved non-lethal wildlife deterrents to protect livestock and crops.

This community-based program is funded by Benton County and managed by county staff in partnership with citizen volunteers and representatives from local agricultural and wildlife organizations including Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Oregon State University Extension Small Farms Program, Chintimini Wildlife Center, and founding members of the public (R. and P. Comeleo) which serve as the Grant Selection Committee.

Free education and consultation services are provided by Benton County, Oregon State University Extension Service, Chintimini Wildlife Center, and Program Advisors. The Program Advisors include national experts in ranching with wildlife, predator ecology, and human-carnivore conflict.

Lastly, the AWPP has a variety of online and printed informational resources for community members as well as a 'Lending Toolkit' which contains non-lethal deterrent options including fence extenders, acoustic



deterrents and visual deterrents that can be checked out and tested by farms who would like to try different deterrent methods.

### 3. Program Goals

The primary goals of the **Benton County Agriculture and Wildlife Protection Program** are to:

- ✓ **Protect** livestock, crops and property while coexisting with wildlife;
- ✓ **Provide opportunity** for use of non-lethal animal damage deterrents to prevent conflicts with wildlife;
- ✓ **Educate** farmers and the community about wildlife conflicts and non-lethal alternatives of control;
- ✓ Build a **collaborative relationship** between the farming and wildlife conservation communities and Benton County government around common goals.

The AWPP does not evaluate or make recommendations on everyday animal husbandry practices, farm animal welfare, wildlife habitat, or land use.

### 5. Education and Outreach

The 2023-2025 biennial AWPP budget includes up to \$5,000 in allotted funds for outreach and education. This program provides educational information in the form of webpages, brochures, press releases, interactive handout materials, information tables and occasional public presentations on wildlife conflict prevention. These have included a table and hosted speakers at the OSU Extension Small Farms Conference.

In 2023, USDA Wildlife Services had funds available specifically for non-lethal beaver mitigation. These funds were used to purchase outreach materials for tabling events which allowed for surplus education and outreach funds to be distributed to farmers. AWPP funds were used to create a new, durable program banner for event tabling.

AWPP provides consultation services on the selection and use of non-lethal wildlife deterrents at the request of agricultural operators in Benton County that are anticipating or have experienced conflicts with wildlife. Additional public-focused education and consultation services are provided by Benton County, Oregon State University Extension Service, Chintimini Wildlife Center, and AWPP Program Advisors. The Program Advisors include experts in ranching with wildlife, predator ecology, and human-carnivore conflict. More about the resources AWPP offers can be found at [pw.bentoncountyor.gov/AWPP](http://pw.bentoncountyor.gov/AWPP).

### 6. Grant Program

#### 2024 Program Results

AWPP grantees are required to keep project records, report conflicts, evaluate their project, and abide by program requirements for three years following the completion of their project.

Reporting compliance is increasing from past years, likely due to the new electronic reporting format and reminder emails. Reports are important as they allow for quantitative assessment of the effectiveness and benefits of non-lethal deterrent systems. Generally, past grant awardees have been

very positive about their deterrents and experience and in many cases have referred friends or neighbors to the program.

***Some notable highlights in 2024:***

- An Alsea farm noted increased predation pressure in recent years, even with the implementation of non-lethal deterrents. This farm noted the loss of one lamb and needed to acquire the services of the Benton County trapper after this event, which happened subsequently to depredations on other farms in the area during fall 2024. Despite the loss the grant recipient noted they still are appreciative for the program.
- The community of Alsea held a town hall meeting regarding cougar depredations in September 2024. The AWPP coordinator attended this meeting to gain better understanding of the situation and notify community members of available AWPP resources.
- One Philomath farmer noted that in fall 2024, a black bear was present in the area and resulted in the destruction of a neighbor's beehive and trash cans. They stated that their operation being undisturbed was a testament to the effectiveness of their deterrents.
- The AWPP was able to award a grant to the Corvallis Waldorf School to build a chicken coop and fenced area to house chickens that were previously being depredated at another location; the School now has a population of chickens for students and their families to care for, as well as a non-lethal deterrence demonstration project.
- 100% of applicants stated they would recommend the program to others, and 100% of respondents said they would apply again.

## 2024 Awards

**In 2024, \$28,915 was awarded to 10 Benton County Farms in total.**

The average property size for 2024 awardees was 12.36 acres, ranging from 2-30 acres. Farm operations provided all levels of income: no income, supplemental and primary income. Livestock protected in 2024 included nearly all categories of livestock and poultry such as sheep, goats, pigs, cattle, chickens, ducks, and geese. Fencing around bee hives was also included in one award

(See table next page).



Table 1. 10 Benton County farms completed AWPP-funded projects in 2024.

Farm	Location	Size (Acres)	Funded Non-lethal Deterrents	Livestock Protected	Funded Amount
1	Corvallis <i>Emergency Grant</i>	10	Livestock guardian dog, supplies	Ducks	\$1,930
2	Corvallis <i>Emergency Grant</i>	3	Chicken fencing/netting	Chickens	\$390
3	Alsea <i>Emergency Grant</i>	30	New fencing, protective livestock housing	Chickens, goats	\$4,435
4	Alsea <i>Emergency Grant</i>	27	New (electrified) fencing/ fencing improvements, scare devices, housing	Sheep, cattle	<i>Not completed</i>
5	Alsea <i>Emergency Grant</i>	3	Electrified fencing, chicken coop	Goats, sheep, chickens	\$2,750
6	Corvallis <i>Emergency Grant</i>	11	Chicken coop, electric poultry netting	Chickens	\$5,000
7	Monroe	11	Protective housing	Chickens, goats, ducks	\$3,000
8	Alsea	2	New electrified fencing, fencing improvements, protective housing	Chickens, ducks, geese	\$4,260
9	Monroe	4	Scare devices, protective housing	Sheep, goats	\$3,600
10	Alsea	10	Electrified fencing, housing, deterrents	Chickens	\$550
11	Monroe	25	Livestock guardian dog, new standard fencing	Sheep, ducks	\$3,000

AWPP Grant Recipients in Benton County, 2018-2024

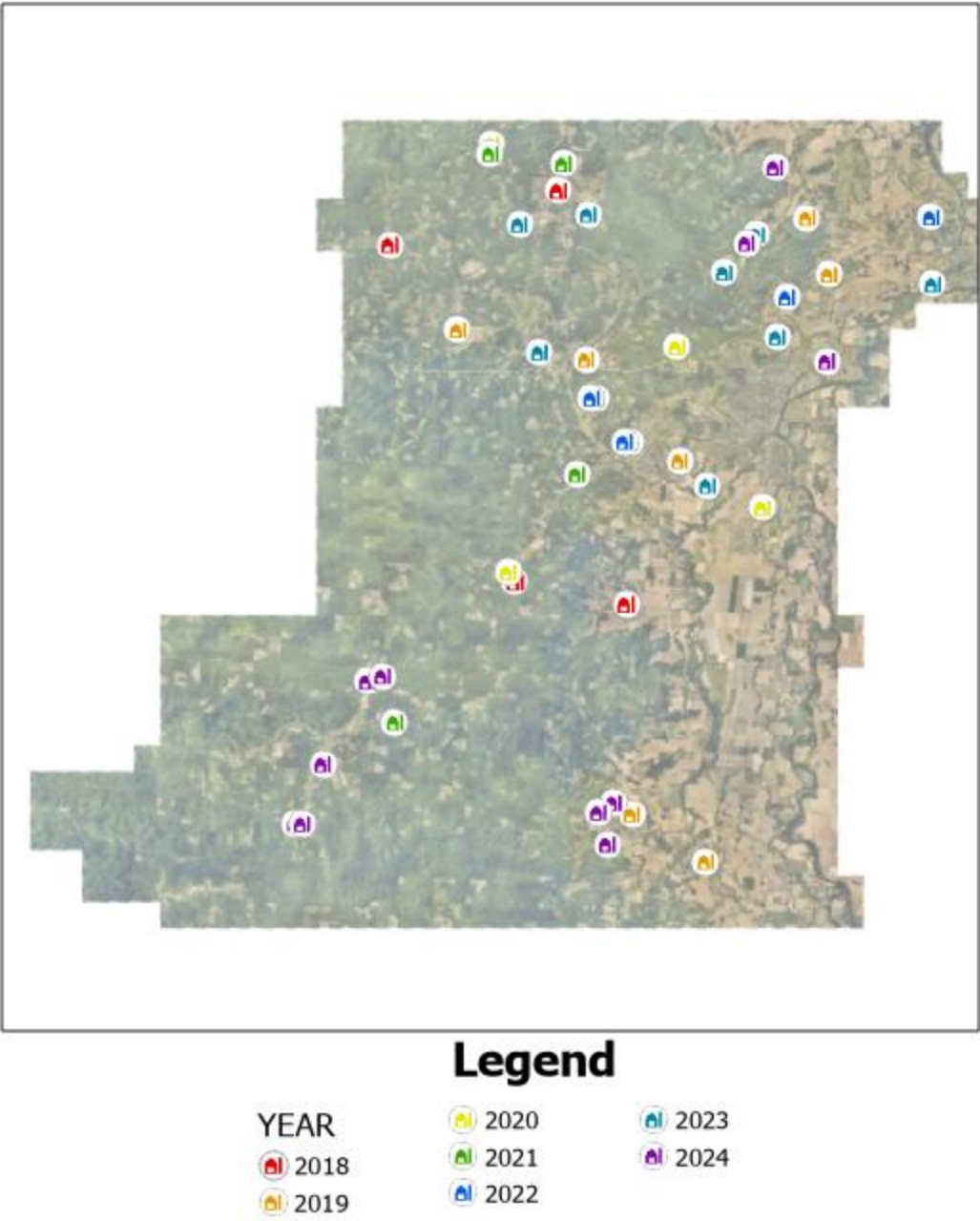


Figure 4. A map of Benton County AWPP grant recipients, 2018-Present. AWPP projects are across the County and awareness around the program is increasing. In many cases, communication between neighbors has resulted in subsequent applications by adjacent farmers.

## 7. Resources

### 7.1 Websites

AWPP Website	<a href="https://pw.bentoncountyor.gov/awpp">https://pw.bentoncountyor.gov/awpp</a>
Livestock-Predator Hub	<a href="http://rangelands.ucdavis.edu/predator-hub/current-research/">http://rangelands.ucdavis.edu/predator-hub/current-research/</a>
Farming with Carnivores Network	<a href="http://farmingwithcarnivoresnetwork.com/animal-husbandry/">http://farmingwithcarnivoresnetwork.com/animal-husbandry/</a>
Non-Lethal Solutions to Reduce Conflicts	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/y9eyed3h">https://tinyurl.com/y9eyed3h</a>
The Encyclopedia of Animal Predators	<a href="https://www.jandohner.com/resources">https://www.jandohner.com/resources</a>
Safeguarding Livestock	<a href="http://mountainlion.org/portalprotectlivestock.asp">http://mountainlion.org/portalprotectlivestock.asp</a>
Resolving Conflicts with Beaver	<a href="https://www.beaverinstitute.org/">https://www.beaverinstitute.org/</a>

### 7.2 Books

Choe JC. Encyclopedia of animal behavior. Academic Press; 2019 Jan 21.

Dohner JV. Livestock guardians: Using dogs, donkeys, and llamas to protect your herd. Storey Publishing; 2007 Dec 12.

Goldfarb B. Eager: the surprising, secret life of beavers and why they matter. Chelsea Green Publishing; 2018.

Elbroch M. The cougar conundrum: sharing the world with a successful predator. Island Press; 2020 Aug 13.

Shivik J. The predator paradox: Ending the war with wolves, bears, cougars, and coyotes. Beacon Press; 2014 May 13.

### 7.4 Scientific Journals

Blejwas, K. M., B. N. Sacks, M. M. Jaeger, and D. R. McCullough. 2002. The effectiveness of selective removal of breeding coyotes in reducing sheep predation. Journal of Wildlife Management 66:451-62.

Conner, M. M., M. M. Jaeger, T. J. Weller, and D. R. McCullough. 1998. Effect of coyote removal on sheep depredation in northern California. Journal of Wildlife Management 62:690-99.

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Jaeger M. M. 2004. Selective targeting of alpha coyotes to stop sheep depredation. Sheep & Goat Research Journal 19:80-84. [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage/nwrc/publications/04pubs/jaeger041.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/nwrc/publications/04pubs/jaeger041.pdf)

Jaeger, M. M., K. M. Blejwas, B. N. Sacks, J. C. C. Neale, M. M. Conner, and D. R. McCullough. 2001. Targeting alphas can make coyote control more effective and socially acceptable. California Agriculture 55:32-36.

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Sacks, B. N., M. M. Jaeger, J. C. C. Neale, D. R. McCullough. 1999. Territoriality and breeding status of coyotes relative to sheep predation. The Journal of Wildlife Management 63:593-605. <http://tinyurl.com/y2bupamd>

Shivik, J. A., A. Treves, P. Callahan. 2003. Non-lethal techniques for managing predation: primary and secondary repellents. Conservation Biology 17:1531-37.

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Shivik, J.A. 2004. Non-lethal Alternatives for Predation Management. Sheep & Goat Research Journal 19:64-71.  
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=icwdmsheepgoat>

Treves, A., M. Krofel, J. McManus. 2016. Predator control should not be a shot in the dark. Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment 14(7): 380–388.  
[http://faculty.nelson.wisc.edu/treves/pubs/Treves\\_Krofel\\_McManus.pdf](http://faculty.nelson.wisc.edu/treves/pubs/Treves_Krofel_McManus.pdf)

## Appendix I: Past Award Summaries

Table 1. Eight Benton County farms completed AWPP-funded projects in 2023.

Farm	Location	Size (Acres)	Funded Non-lethal Deterrents	Protecting	Funded Amount
1	Corvallis – <i>Emergency Grant</i>	9.5	Chicken netting, fencing	Chickens (25)	\$548.00
2	Corvallis – <i>Emergency Grant</i>	4.25	Fencing with electric top and bottom wire, energizer, Wyze outdoor camera	Chickens, goats (11)	\$589.50
3	Albany	10	Fencing, lighting, shed improvements	Sheep, chickens (44)	\$5,000
4	Philomath	5	Electric fencing, scare devices, protective housing	Goats (5), chickens (20), geese (2)	\$5,000
5	Corvallis	2	Woven no-climb fencing; protective housing	Chickens (60)	\$4,049
6	Corvallis	28	Electrified fencing, livestock guardian animal, Foxlights/scare devices	Sheep (350)	\$5,000
7	Philomath	43	New fencing, electric netting	Sheep (13)	\$2,200
8	Philomath	12	Sound deterrents, portable electric fencing	Chickens (50), geese (11)	\$1,544

Table 2. Four Benton County farms completed AWPP-funded projects in 2022.

Farm	Location	Size (Acres)	Funded Non-lethal Deterrents	Protecting	Funded Amount
1	Philomath	5.88	Livestock guardian dogs, fencing, housing	Sheep, goats, cattle, multiple poultry species	\$1,968.07
2	N. Albany	1	Fencing, chicken coop	Chickens	\$3,679.00
3	Corvallis	8.08	Livestock guardian animals, housing, fencing	Sheep, goats, chickens, turkeys	\$4,998.00
4	Philomath	24	Livestock guardian dogs, lights, fencing	Sheep, goats, alpaca	\$5,000.00

Table 3. Five Benton County farms completed AWPP-funded projects in 2021.

Farm	Location	Size (Acres)	Funded Non-lethal Deterrents	Protecting	Funded Amount
1	Corvallis	0.5	Fencing	Chickens	\$462.80
2	Alsea	67	Scare devices	Sheep, goats, chickens, ducks, turkeys	\$1053.00
3	Monmouth	13	Bird netting	Fruit trees, blueberries	\$1874.23
4	Philomath	1.1	Tree netting	Fruit tree orchard	\$964.90
5	Philomath	2.75	New fencing	Sheep, chickens, ducks, turkeys, fruit and nut trees	\$5,000

Table 4. Four Benton County farms that completed AWPP-funded projects in 2020.

Farm	Location	Size (Acres)	Funded Non-lethal Deterrents	Protecting	Funded Amount
1	Corvallis	1.17	Coop Extension	Chickens	\$274
2	Philomath	2.75	Electronet Fencing	Chickens	\$638
3	Philomath	3	Electric Fencing and Shed	Goats, Chickens, Bees	\$4,549
4	Philomath	5.46	Motion Lights and Barn	Goats, Pigs	\$4,934

Table 5. Seven Benton County farms completed AWPP-funded projects in 2019.

Farm	Location	Size (Acres)	Funded Non-lethal Deterrents	Protecting	Funded Amount
1	Corvallis	2	Electronet Fencing, Nite Guard Lights, Bird Repellent Tape, Motion Detection Cameras	Chickens	\$1,677
2	Monroe	3.5	Electronet Fencing, Nite Guard Lights, Bird Repellent Tape	Chickens, Orchard, Vegetables	\$560
3	Blodgett	32	Electric Fencing and Calving Shed	Cows, Turkeys, Pigs	\$4,676
4	Philomath	90	Electric Fencing and Foxlights	Goats, Chickens, Turkeys, Pigs	\$5,000
5	Philomath	10.5	Upgraded Fencing and Electric Fencing	Variety of Livestock, Orchard, Grass Crop	\$3,409
6	Corvallis	4.5	Upgraded Fencing, Electric Fencing, Motion Detection Lighting, Pens	Variety of Livestock, Orchard	\$4,810
7	Monroe	5.14	Birthing Barn	Sheep, Chickens, Timber, Orchard, Fruit	\$3,000



Table 6. Six Benton County farms completed AWPP-funded projects in 2018.

Farm	Location	Size (Acres)	Funded Non-lethal Deterrents	Protecting	Funded Amount
1	Corvallis	4	Electronet and Deer Fencing	Sheep, Goats, Crops	\$4,261
2	Philomath	50	Guardian Dogs, Electric Fencing, Foxlights	Chickens, Turkeys, Pigs	\$5,000
3	Philomath	10	Woven Wire Fencing, Enclosed Barn	Goats, Chickens, Bee Hives	\$5,000
4	Alsea	67	Electric Fencing, Nite Guard Lights	Variety of Livestock, Bee Hives	\$2,621
5	Blodgett	52	Electric Fencing, Night Corrals	Goats	\$3,713
6	Philomath	102	Guard Dogs, Electric Fencing, Bird Gard, Birthing Sheds	Sheep <sup>1</sup> , Hazelnuts	\$4,768

<sup>1</sup> The sheep were sold off in the middle of 2019.

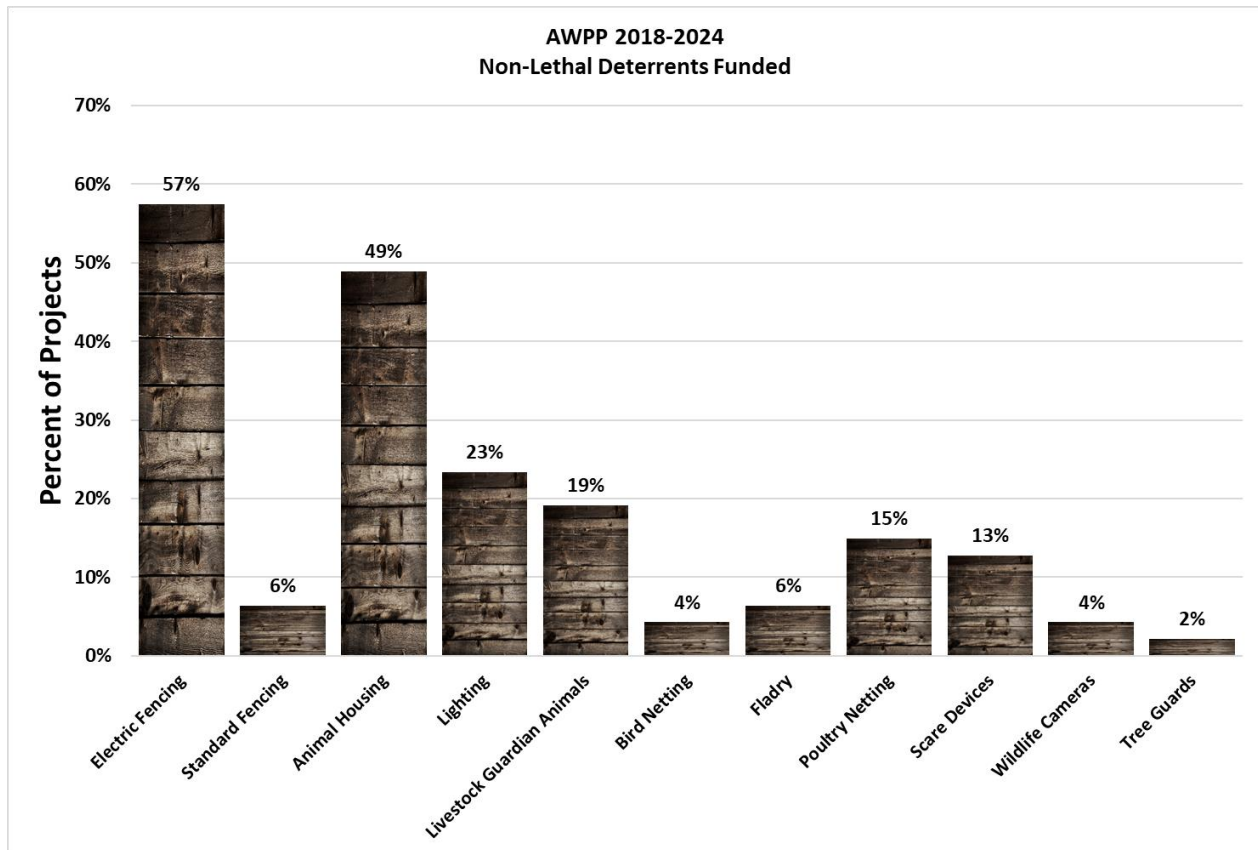


Figure 5. Summary of deterrent categories installed, 2018-2024.

## Appendix II: Recipient Feedback about the AWPP

These testimonials illustrate the recent positive experiences that Benton County farmers are having with their AWPP projects:

*“Receiving the AWPP grant to build a hen house and enclosed run, as well as fencing to rotationally pasture the flock, has truly changed our school! All of our students love visiting, feeding, and caring for the chickens, from the toddlers in the parent/child program all the way up to 8th grade. Having well-protected chickens in an automated coop has made it possible for us to have the flock at school, and we would not have been able to protect the flock this well without the grant. Thank you, AWPP!”*

*“Black Bear was active in neighborhood from Oct to Dec. Knocked over beehive of adjacent neighbor and many trashcans within 1/4 mile of site. The fact that our operation was undisturbed is a testament to the effectiveness of the AWPP fencing and barn.”*

*“The netting has been very successful in keeping our fruit from being consumed by the birds and raccoons”*

## Appendix III. 'AWPP in a Nutshell'



# Agriculture and Wildlife Protection Program

"In a Nutshell"



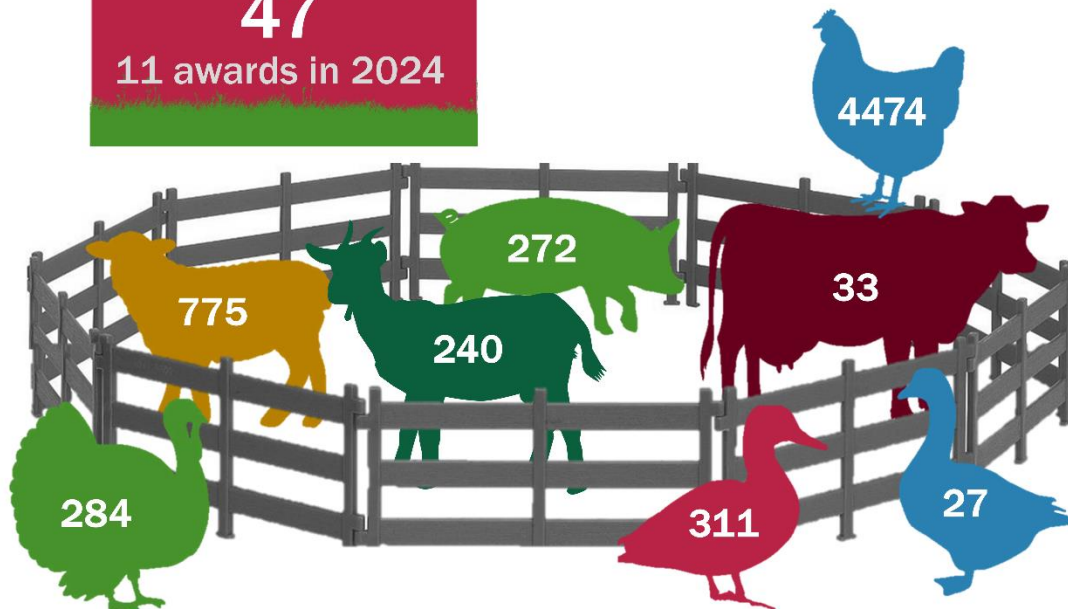
**\$136,539 in non-lethal wildlife deterrent grants awarded to Benton County farmers!**

AWPP Awards  
2017-2024:

**47**

11 awards in 2024

**Average Farm Size:  
18.67 acres**



**6453 livestock protected...and counting!**

Learn more at [pw.bentoncountyor.gov/AWPP](http://pw.bentoncountyor.gov/AWPP)