

# Agricultural producers experience millions of dollars in crop damage due to rising populations of migratory geese in California



Farmers and ranchers in the Sacramento Valley of California have reported a dramatic increase in damage to winter crops and pastures by geese, with 2023 the worst year they have experienced.

The amount of wintering geese has nearly doubled since 2006, and producers lack effective management strategies to deter such high quantities of geese from causing damage to their pastures and newly planted crops.



Photo: Snow Goose. Dave Menke, USFWS

## Over 8 million dollars reported in losses

To quantify the financial impact that occurred in 2023 in Yolo, Solano, and Sacramento counties, we surveyed farmers and ranchers for losses and other costs due to geese. Damage was reported at 55 unique sites amounting to 58,784 acres (See map). The reported losses totaled \$8.199 million, with \$7.916 million in direct losses of crops and \$282,900 in abatement and crop reseeding costs.



Photo: Large flock of geese grazing in a pasture.

## Livestock producers among the hardest hit

\$4.5 million in direct losses were in pastures managed for cattle production.

*"I've had to purchase two loads of alfalfa every week since December 15 at \$10,000 per load. That's 16 loads of hay at a cost of \$160,000. I have never had to feed very much hay after December 15 in the past 35 years. This is enough to bankrupt a person."* – Survey participant

## Limited options for financial relief or effective management solutions

Existing financial relief programs do not cover losses due to wildlife. Abatement strategies (scarecrows, chasing, shooting, etc.) and expanded CA hunting regulations have not been effective at reducing damage.

*"Birds become used to noise, cattle, ATV chasing and just move one field over or barely move."* – Survey participant

The severity of this wildlife-human conflict signals the need for coordinated and broad-based programs that address wintering geese management and financial relief for affected agricultural producers.

Morgan Doran – [mpdoran@ucanr.edu](mailto:mpdoran@ucanr.edu)  
Livestock and Natural Resources

Breanna Martinico – [bmartinico@ucanr.edu](mailto:bmartinico@ucanr.edu)  
Human-Wildlife Interactions

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