Effectively training farm workers requires regular reinforcement. A one-time training is almost never enough. With respect to wildlife damage, regular reminders of risk ensure workers do the right thing every time. One way to help train workers on how they should respond to different types of animal damage is by using picture flash cards.

On the following pages you can find several flash cards that you can cut out on the solid lines and fold along the dotted lines. Use these as part of a tailgate training with farm workers. These serve to start conversations around relative risk.

To help give some background with respect to wildlife risk, let’s talk a bit about the relative risks associated with the three main signs of animal intrusion, tracks, crop damage/feeding, and fecal contamination. We can see them listed in the chart on the next page. In the case of animal tracks, if you find only one instance of tracks in the field, the risk of contamination is low, and the surrounding crops are most likely safe to harvest. However, if you find widespread animal tracks, the contamination risk is moderate, and you may want to create a no harvest buffer zone around nearby crops.

If only one small area of crop damage is encountered, it is low risk, but sporadic crop damage carries a moderate risk. Widespread crop damage likely led to significant contamination, meaning affected crops must not be harvested. The risks associated with fecal matter in the field are the highest.
Workers also need to consider whether the crop will be hand harvested or machine harvested. Hand harvest is by its nature very selective. Farm workers can recognize and not pick produce that is visibly contaminated. A small cue like a flag or a piece of flagging tape can go a long way in alerting a farm worker to be vigilant in an area for wildlife feces. The no-harvest buffers can be quite small with hand harvest as well.

Most research shows that under normal circumstances, scat stays within 5 feet of where it is deposited. In instances where workers may pick over a field multiple times over the course of a season, harvest workers themselves can plant flags in areas where feces is found in close proximity to the product as they pick. Because this reduces the rate of harvest, some workers paid on piece rate may need to be incentivized to do this.

Machine harvesting is very NON-selective. A contaminated piece of produce carried through a mechanical harvester could smear feces across every surface of the harvester. Every other piece of produce would then pick up feces on the contaminated surface. A 5-foot buffer around a significant fecal deposit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>One instance</th>
<th>Sporadic</th>
<th>Widespread</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tracks</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crop damage</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fecal contamination</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With sporadic evidence of fecal matter, or even just one instance of it, the risk of contamination is moderate. Widespread evidence of fecal contamination would justify some step to minimize harvest of the contaminated crop. This chart can be useful in evaluating what areas of the field you can and cannot harvest in order to maximize both safety and profitability.
Wildlife Damage Flash Cards

often can not readily be steered around. As such, areas with significant crop damage and fecal contamination may need to be avoided altogether. When determining a buffer around significant animal intrusion, consider the type of harvest.

Risks posed by wildlife cannot be eliminated, but they can be managed through a common-sense preharvest wildlife scouting program. By taking action and not harvesting areas where significant wildlife damage is found, you really can make the produce you grow safer.

* A 5-foot no-harvest buffer zone is a suggested distance based on scientific findings. It is not magic or absolute. If your judgement suggests that a greater distance is necessary based on the risk (e.g. crop type, harvest method), use the greater distance.

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