

Black Vulture Relief Act of 2023

Main Point:

- Farmers should have the right to protect their livestock when threatened by predatory animals. This bill allows farmers to protect their newborn livestock from black vultures without big government interference.

Background:

- Over the past several decades, black vultures' [expanding population](#) has led to an additional burdensome and costly strain on livestock producers due to increased livestock depredation by these birds.
 - Black vultures are most prevalent in the Southeast and Midwest but have been spotted as far north as New York and Michigan and as far west as Arizona.
- Black vultures, often in flocks of 20+, brutally attack and eat newborn calves, lambs, goat kids, and piglets.
 - These attacks are gruesome, lasting an average of 3.5 hours as the vultures eat the animal alive.
 - They will also attack/injure cows, heifers, ewes, does, and sows in labor or postpartum when they are more vulnerable.
- In 2015, vultures caused 24,600 calf deaths, accounting for 10 percent of all calf deaths due to predators.
 - Vultures were the third leading cause of calf deaths due to predators, only behind coyotes and unknown predators.
 - This number has increased in recent years as black vulture populations have increased.
- According to the U.S. Geological Survey [Breeding Bird Survey](#), the black vulture population has increased by approximately 468 percent since 1990.
- In 2016, the [North American Bird Conservation Initiative](#) rated black vultures as a species of lowest conservation concern, indicating “a widespread, relatively secure species.”
- Despite the bird's robust population, the black vulture is protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA) making it illegal to take one without obtaining a depredation permit.
 - For black vultures, [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) (FWS) issues master permits to states who then issue sub-permits to ranchers.
 - Current state participants are Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, Tennessee, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.
 - Sub-permittees are limited to 3-5 black vulture takes annually. This take limit is the main roadblock that ranchers face to protect their livestock.
- From 2015-2019, requests to FWS for depredation permits for black vultures increased by 26 percent.
 - Black vulture cattle depredation has been confirmed in 18 states and is expected to grow due to the bird's expanding population range from the Southeast and Midwest regions toward the north.

The Black Vulture Relief Act of 2023 would:

1. Remove the requirement for a depredation permit, allowing farmers and ranchers to take black vultures anytime the birds threaten their livestock.
2. Preserve the requirement for annual take reporting to FWS, allowing FWS to continue monitoring black vulture population numbers.

House Companion: [HR.1437](#) introduced by Representatives John Rose (R-Tenn.) and Darren Soto (D-Fla.).

Supporting Groups: American Farm Bureau Federation; U.S. Cattlemen's Association; National Cattlemen's Beef Association, 17 state cattlemen's affiliates: Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia; and the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife and Conservation.