

Many pest management professionals are aware of various certification programs for pest controllers. You know that certification raises industry standards and brings prestige to those able to become certified. What you may not know is that the nuisance wildlife control industry also has a certification program — the Certified Wildlife Control Operator program, which is sponsored by the National Wildlife Control Operators Association. The National Wildlife Control Operators Association (NWCOA for short [pronounced new-co-aah]) is a non-profit trade association dedicated to serving the needs and interests of animal damage controllers. Wildlife control operators who become certified attain the title “Certified Wildlife Control Professional” and can put the letters “CWCP” after their name.

NWCOA, which established the certification program in 2001, wanted a program flexible enough to encompass the industry’s diversity while requiring applicants to achieve a meaningful standard. NWCOA knew that as industry competition continued to grow, certification would become more valuable. Certification would show consumers and state officials that the professional is an experienced wildlife damage controller.

Stamp of Approval

Pest management professionals — and others offering wildlife control services — can now become Certified Wildlife Control Professionals.



By Stephen Vantassel

THE PROCESS. To become certified, applicants must successfully complete each of the program's four basic requirements.

The first requirement addresses field experience. NWCOA requires applicants to have at least three years of full-time animal damage control experience. "Full time" is defined as a 40-hour work week, 50 weeks per year. Sensitive to the large number of part-timers

in the field, NWCOA allows applicants to qualify provided they have worked 20 hours per week, 50 weeks per year for six years. The key to fulfilling the experience requirement lies in demonstrating that the work is related or linked to the wildlife damage control field. Pest controllers are eligible as well, provided they demonstrate they worked at least 1,000 hours per year in a wildlife control-related



The patch Certified Wildlife Control Professionals can wear once they've passed the certification process. (The "100" on the patch is for the first 100 certified members only.)

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area for six years. NWCOA wants applicants to explain what they do in the field of animal damage control.

Education comprises the second requirement of the certification program. NWCOA demands that candidates obtain 100 hours of training divided across four separate educational categories. The categories include biology, handling, technical and safety.

Following are details regarding the specific categories:

- Category 1 (biology): Any instruction regarding the habits and life cycles of wildlife.
- Category 2 (handling): Any training relating to the proper care of wildlife under your direct control. Topics in this category include euthanasia, relocation, trap comfort, treatment of trapped wildlife, etc.
- Category 3 (technical): Instruction on the mechanics of animal damage control and on proper business practices (i.e., a class about tax preparation).
- Category 4 (health): Centers on public as well as personal safety. Instruction relating to wildlife diseases, ladder safety, etc., should be accounted for under this category.

Applicants must experience 20 hours in each category. The remaining 20 hours are elective and can be in any combination in the four categories.

The purpose of these categories is to encourage applicants to broaden their education beyond what is immediately applicable to their businesses. NWCOA is flexible and accepts training from a variety of sources, including but not limited to, college classes, videos, books, seminars, etc. NWCOA wanted to acknowledge the benefits of self-study while simultaneously encouraging the creation of seminars and workshops targeting NWCOs. If you live in areas too remote for even those types of events, it even grants hours for reading books, journal and

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trade magazine articles. Knowing that not all "training hours" are identical, NWCOA established certain principles regarding the crediting of hours (see www.nwcoa.com for further information.)

The third requirement for certification is acceptance and adherence to the Code of Ethics (available on NWCOA's Web site). Essentially, CWCPs are required to follow

the Good Samaritan principle of how they would wish others to treat them if they were the customer. Those found to have violated the Code of Ethics can have their certification revoked.

Finally, the last requirement is money — the fee is \$90 for NWCOA members and \$120 for non-members. *You don't need to join NWCOA to be certified.* Membership and

certification are different programs. While NWCOA certainly hopes that CWCPs join the association, there is no requirement to do so.

THE FINAL STEP. The application can be downloaded at www.nwcoa.com. If you don't have access to the Internet, send a check for \$25 to either Phil Nichols PVE, 3138 Wild Run Rd., Pennsburg, PA 18073 or Jim Soper, P.O. Box 7423, North Augusta, SC 29861. When the completed application is received the \$25 will be credited towards the certification fee.

Send the completed application, appropriate supporting materials and payment to one of the committee members closest to you. Keep a copy for yourself and send the application via certified mail. The Certification Committee has 90 days to review the application and provide its decision. If your application passes the committee member, it is then sent to the chairman who makes the final decision.


Certification recipients receive a certificate, a certification number, a listing on the NWCOA Web site and a patch. They also receive permission to use the certification logo on their letterhead and the title "CWCP" after their name. At present, only individuals can be certified (there is no certification program for companies). To maintain certification, you must participate in 60 hours of training and professional development every three years (category minimums no longer apply).

The Certification Committee understands that there are many out there who are already qualified. You just need to show you qualify on paper. If you have any further questions, feel free to contact me via e-mail at svantassel@giemedia.com I will be glad to assist you. 🐾

The author is a Certified Wildlife Control Professional and a project coordinator for the University of Nebraska, Lincoln's School of Natural Resources. He can be reached at svantassel@giemedia.com.

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For more information on becoming a Certified Wildlife Control Professional visit www.nwcoa.com.

The National Wildlife Control Operators Association is a non-profit professional organization dedicated to raising professional standards in the animal damage control industry.



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