

Becoming A Certified Wildlife Control Professional

"Do you have to have a college degree in order to become certified by NWCOA?" "I would like to join your organization but I am not sure I am qualified." As the chairman of the CWCP Certification Committee, I get questions like these from people concerned about the certification process and their eligibility. I am writing this article in the hopes of dispelling various misconceptions about the certification program and thereby encourage more of you to join the ranks of other Certified Wildlife Control Professionals.

The certification program was created to provide a standard and title for those NWCO's looking to show that they have achieved a certain basic level of expertise. As competition continues to grow in the wildlife damage control industry, NWCOA hopes to see the certification program used by NWCO's as a marketing tool. Certification will show consumers and state officials that you have worked to become educated in your field and that you are not an inexperienced wildlife damage controller. (For those of you new to the industry, NWCOA offers a Certification apprentice program see below). Those who become certified get their names listed on the NWCOA web site, receive a certificate and gain permission to use certification logos and images. Patches are presently be created.

There are four basic parts of the certification program. The first part requires one to have at least 3 years of full time or 6 years of part time wildlife damage control experience. We have designed this certification to focus on activities and skills needed by people involved in actual field wildlife damage control (whether private or government operated). (We hope to add other certifications for people involved in other aspects of the wildlife damage control industry such as biologists, researchers and equipment manufacturers etc. in the future). The key to fulfilling this experience requirement lies in demonstrating that your work is related or linked to the wildlife damage control field. NWCOA recognizes that the work done in the field by wildlife damage control professionals is extremely broad and we wanted a certification program that could encompass that diversity and acknowledge the importance of that field experience.

The second part of the certification program, namely the educational requirement, is also the most misunderstood. NWCOA requires that certified candidates experience 100 hours of training in which one must have 20 hours in each of four separate categories. The categories cover the four aspects of the wildlife damage controllers work namely, biology, handling, technical and safety. One must get 20 hours in each category. The final twenty hours are elective and can be scattered in any of the four categories. Permit me to take a few moments to explain the four categories in more detail.

Category one, biology, is anything that teaches you about the habits, lifecycle of wildlife. If you attend a seminar and the title of the session at 1:00 pm-2:00 p.m. is "The Natural History of the Gray Squirrel" you can list this class as one hour in the biology slot.

For more information on becoming a Certified Wildlife Control Professional visit <http://www.nwcoa.com> NWCOA is a non-profit professional organization dedicated to raising professional standards in the animal damage control industry.

Category two, handling, includes any instruction of how you should handle wildlife in your direct control, like in a trap or catch pole. Topics would include euthanasia, relocation, trap comfort, treatment of trapped wildlife, etc.

Category three, technical, deals with anything related to what you need to know to catch wildlife and run your company. If you take a class in taxes with H&R Block then you can claim those hours for your certification.

Category four, health, centers on public safety and personal safety. Any lecture etc that covers wildlife diseases, ladder safety etc will be listed under this category.

Unfortunately, too many people thought we required college course training to fulfill these hourly requirements. While NWCOA accepts college courses toward fulfilling the hourly requirement, we do not require college courses. But if you have college courses that would fit into one of these categories we will give you three hours credit for every one credit hour granted by your college. For example, if you took a 3 credit hour biology class. You would list that class as fulfilling 9 hours in your biology category. But if you don't have any college experience don't worry. NWCOA accepts training from a broad range of sources. While our openness may change in the future, we recognize that at the present time there are very few official programs dedicated to training NWCO's. So we accept training received through State trapper education classes, Hunter Ed classes, WCT seminars, NTA seminars, Fur Taker's College, HSUS classes, certain pest control lectures etc. If you live in areas too remote for even those types of events, we even grant hours for reading books and articles. To encourage and recognize the creators and disseminators of knowledge, we grant double credit (on a one time basis) for those who teach or write an article. For example, if you gave a lecture for one hour at a WCT seminar on baiting box traps then you would get credit for 2 hours towards your category 3. The listeners to your lecture would only get one hour.

Some of you may be wondering, "100 hours, how am I ever going to fulfill that requirement?" Relax it is easier than you think. To assist you with the paperwork, the certification committee is constantly adding qualified training to our web certification list. This saves you the trouble of figuring out how to classify the hours. All you have to do is list the class, prove you were there and list the hours. The courses are categorized by the year they occurred. Some courses are given standard values. For example, state run trapping education classes provide 2.5 hours in each category no matter what year or state you took it in. The same applies to hunter education classes. Of course if you teach the class you can double those figures. WCT seminars provide 5 hours in each category.

Let me give you a few scenarios that will fulfill the hourly requirements. These are only examples. You don't have to copy them but if you do then you will fulfill the hourly requirement.

If you attended five WCT seminars then you have fulfilled your 100 hour requirement.

If you attended only four WCT seminars and either a hunter ed. or trapper ed. course then you fulfill the requirement. If you attended only three WCT and attended both hunter ed.

and trapper ed. then you fulfill the requirement. Visit our certification pages and you will be able to develop a myriad of other combinations.

The third qualification for certification is acceptance of the Code of Ethics. You can view them at our NWCOA web site <http://www.nwcoa.com> But essentially, they require you to follow the Good Samaritan principle of how you would wish others to treat you if you were the customer and not the NWCO.

Finally, the last qualification is money. You have to pay the fee to become a CWCP. Presently the fee stands at 90 dollars for NWCOA members and 120 for non-members. I need to make this clear. You don't need to join NWCOA to be certified. Membership and certification are totally different programs. While we certainly hope that CWCPs join NWCOA there is no requirement to do so.

Now if you are new to the wildlife damage control field you can still demonstrate your commitment to the industry by becoming an Apprentice Wildlife Control Professional (AWCP). When you sign up for this program you have three years to satisfy the full CWCP requirements, plus the money you spend on this program will be deducted from the full CWCP payment when you matriculate to full CWCP status. Cost of AWCP is 45 for members and 60 for non-members. So you get the recognition that you are an apprentice without having to pay twice.

You can download the paperwork from the NWCOA web site at <http://www.nwcoa.com> If you don't have access to the internet, simply send a check for 25 dollars to any of the committee people on the list below, except the chairman. When we receive your completed application, we will credit the 25 dollars towards your certification fee.

When you finish your application and include appropriate supporting materials and payment don't send it to the chairman. Instead, send it to one of the committee members closest to you. Always keep a copy for yourself and send the application via certified mail.

We hope this article helps you understand the certification process better and encourages you become certified. For we on the committee understand that there are many out there who are already qualified. They just need to show they qualify on paper.

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