



BIRD CONTROL IN PERSPECTIVE

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Firmly establish the need and feasibility of a bird control program before considering a specific program's mechanics.

Good sanitation practices often are overlooked in bird-pest situations which could be controlled by eliminating food sources, water sources or nesting sites.

Lethal techniques alleviate damage problems through population reduction. Partial reduction of a bird-pest species in any given year, however, can only provide temporary relief from conflict.

The watchword in the mechanics of any control program should be *specificity*. This implies that the control program affects only the pest species and that the program is directed only to individuals within the group who are in conflict with man's interest. A degree of specificity may be obtained with control chemicals, but the effects are rarely as limited as intended.

Control Techniques

No single pest control technique can be considered a panacea for all situations. Many control techniques may be needed, with little assurance that they will work the following season. In 4

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years of trying to control blackbird roosts, one worker found that efforts to control birds in 1 year (with the obvious exception of tree removal) had no effect on blackbird behavior the next season.

Many variables such as weather conditions influence bird damage to crops. Severe winter weather increases grain loss and bird contamination at feedlots from November through March, especially during periods of snow cover. Juveniles and adults respond differently to control measures. One report indicates that frightening devices and bio-sonics repelled juvenile starlings during the summer and were not effective in the fall at feedlots where large numbers of adult birds were concentrated.

Chemical agents that frighten birds act through the nervous system. Some chemicals put birds to sleep or produce fluttering, flopping and distress symptoms that cause other birds to leave baited areas and stay away for long periods. Other frightening chemicals induce similar behavior but do not have an anesthetizing effect.

Chemical Dangers

Control of pest birds with lethal chemicals has gained considerable momentum in the past two decades, but no oral or contact toxicant has been found to be specific for a given bird species. The use of experimental toxicants presents some danger

to other animal species and man. All chemical control agents — even fright-producing chemicals — are lethal at some concentration. Until chemicals become specific for target species, their use must be restricted.

Legal Aspects

There are also legal problems in lethal bird control. Treaties with Canada and Mexico give continual protection to migratory birds, and such birds can be destroyed only if they are proved to cause damage. Aliens such as house sparrows, pigeons and starlings are unprotected. By unilateral action, the U. S. Congress protects bald and golden eagles. The federal government may grant permission to kill offending eagles and other legally protected birds if necessary in safeguarding farm or forest crops.

By order of the Secretary of the Interior (Part 16, Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations) a person may destroy blackbirds, cowbirds and grackles without a permit when they are about to commit or are committing serious depredations to ornamental and shade trees or agricultural crops. The director of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife has authority to issue depredation permits to kill migratory birds that are about to cause or are causing serious damage to agricultural, horticultural or fish-cultural interests.

An individual who unwittingly destroys legally protected mourning doves or robins while conducting a control program on starlings would be in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and

*Implementation Plan, Pesticide Control Act. Environmental Protection Agency. Federal Register, Volume 38, pp. 1142-1145. January 9, 1973.

subject to prosecution. A game management agent of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife may issue individual permits to cover the accidental destruction of protected birds when a farmer engages in a campaign against blackbirds.

On private property, any campaign against unprotected birds is the responsibility of the person who suffers the damage as long as control methods present no hazard to federally protected species and do not conflict with state laws or local ordinances, which may be more restrictive than federal regulations.

Chemicals used for bird control (avicides) must be registered for use with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the terms of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) as amended by Public Law 92-516 (the Federal Environmental Pesticide Control Act of 1972). As interpreted by the regulatory agency (EPA),* it is unlawful for any person to use a registered pesticide in a manner inconsistent with its labeling. In other words, using a pesticide in any manner other than as directed on the label is unlawful. Any person who violates any provision of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act is subject to prosecution according to the regulatory authority (EPA). Persons considering any form of bird control are encouraged to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the Federal laws referenced and applicable state, county or local laws and regulatory authorities.

Acknowledgment

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