

## A COMPARISON OF LETHAL AND NON-LETHAL MANAGEMENT APPROACHES TO REDUCE DAMAGE ASSOCIATED WITH URBAN CROW ROOSTS IN NEW YORK AND VIRGINIA

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**Abstract:** Crow populations have steadily increased in many parts of the country since 1966. Although large winter congregations of crows in urban environments are not a new phenomenon, the number of complaints regarding damage associated with these large (2,000-20,000 individuals) roosts appears to be increasing. In an effort to assist the public in reducing impacts of urban crow roosts, USDA, APHIS, Wildlife Services in Virginia and New York implemented large-scale roost dispersal programs in the winter of 2001-2002. The goal of the programs were to manage local crow populations to minimize associated noise, accumulations of crow fecal droppings on and around residences, strong ammonia odors from fecal droppings, property damage, clean-up costs and threats to human health and safety. Multiple meetings involving the public and key stakeholders were convened where a variety of options and consequences of each option were discussed. Options considered were no action, habitat alteration, cultural methods, roost dispersal, and roost depopulation. Wildlife Services in each state took different approaches to managing crow roosting sites based on state regulations, available tools, scope of the problem, consequences of each management action, effectiveness of methods, and public input. In Virginia, a lethal control program was initiated targeting one roost site (2,000-6,000 crows/roost) using the avicide DRC-1339. The goals were to remove a significant percentage of the local crow population and disperse the remaining crows. This project resulted in an estimated 73% reduction in crow numbers at the primary roost site and altered roost dynamics at another roost. The cooperators satisfaction level was an immediate 75% reduction in damage based on a polling of affected property owners. This satisfaction level was based on a reduction in fecal droppings, maintenance costs to clean up fecal droppings, noise, and abundance of crows. In upstate New York, two roost sites (16,000-20,000 crows/roost) were successfully dispersed using a non-lethal hazing program (pyrotechnics, recorded crow distress calls and hand-held lasers). In New York, no avicides were registered at the time of this project and the Cities of Troy and Albany requested that WS try a non-lethal program prior to implementing a lethal control program. The number of crows in the primary roost in the cities of Albany and Troy were reduced by more than 95% over the course of an eight-day program. Significant reduction in crow numbers and damage remained more than eight weeks later. In this paper we will provide a comparison of crow management projects in Virginia and New York and discuss implications of different approaches for managing urban crows.

**Key words:** American crows, avicide, *Corvus brachyrhynchos*, damage management, DRC-1339, roost dispersal

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