



Extension FactSheet

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Nuisance Canada Geese: How to Deal With the Problem

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Most goose problems in urban and suburban areas are caused by the Canada goose, which is probably the most adaptable of waterfowl. Because they are generally tolerant of human activity, Canada geese will establish territories and nest around any suitable pond or stream. Not surprisingly, their presence on lawns, golf courses, cemeteries, school yards, backyards, and farms can cause problems, including damage to landscaping, gardens, crops, and water quality.

As with all nuisance wildlife problems and damage concerns, changing your level of tolerance is the easiest solution. You must ultimately decide what level of damage warrants action. If you choose to manage your wildlife problems, remember that there seldom are quick solutions. The good news is that there are steps that you can take to reduce conflicts with geese. The key to successful management, however, is to act when the geese first arrive on your property and to be persistent.

Damage Prevention and Control

Exclusion

Geese can be excluded from small ponds by constructing an overhead grid system of sturdy poles and Kevlar wire (i.e., Philly strand). Use a 20 foot post/line interval at first, but if this is not effective then try a 10 foot grid. Install grids approximately 1 foot above the surface of the water. Sometimes perimeter fencing is also necessary to keep geese from walking underneath the grid system.

Habitat Modification

Habitat modification is the most successful approach to dealing with goose problems. Allowing tall, thick vegetation to grow around ponds or in open areas will deter geese from using an area. If lawn or turf is a must, then geese can be discouraged by (1) reducing fertilizer applications to make grass less pal-

atable and/or nutritious, (2) planting less palatable species (e.g., tall fescue), and (3) eliminating nesting cover. Do not let anyone feed the geese.

Scare Tactics

It is important to begin scare tactics as soon as the geese arrive on your property. Visual repellents include large flags, trash bags, scarecrows, helium balloons, and reflective mylar tape. Devices should be moved every 2–3 days to prevent habituation and used as soon as a problem is detected. Loud noises from a variety of sources (e.g., propane exploders, leaf blowers, shell crackers, electronic alarms, air horns, or sirens) also can be effective at frightening geese. Dogs, especially border collies, can harass geese until they leave the area. In order to be successful, you need to be persistent with your scare tactics.

Trapping and Shooting

Canada geese are protected by federal and state laws. However, with proper permission, trapping and shooting can be effective methods to deal with problem geese. Especially in rural areas, increasing the number of hunters on your property can bring relief. In Ohio, Canada geese are hunted in the fall and winter. Check with state wildlife officials for current regulations and special permits.

Goose Attacks

If you encounter an aggressive goose, be sure to maintain direct eye contact with the animal and face your body directly towards the attacking goose. Do not turn your back or shoulders away from the goose, and do not squint, close, or cover your eyes. If the goose makes an aggressive move towards you, you should slowly back away while maintaining a neutral demeanor (i.e., do not shout or kick).

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