



CEDAR GROVE VETERINARY SERVICE NEWSLETTER



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BIRD CONTROL SOLUTIONS ON DAIRY FARMS

House sparrows, barn swallows, starlings and pigeons. What do these birds all have in common? They are the birds that cause the most issues on US dairy facilities. Of all these birds, only the barn swallow is native to the US.

For people who don't work on farms, they may not understand the impact of birds on a dairy facility. But for those that do, they know they are impactful both as an annoyance and in the wallet. A single startling, for example, can consume 1.8lbs of feed per month with most of that coming from the bunks of the cows. Birds often consume the more expensive components of the ration such as the protein pellets and grain. Birds can also carry diseases that can affect both the animals and the humans working on the farm. The most common microorganism is *Salmonella*, which can be found in 50% of house sparrows. Other diseases of concern are Cryptococcosis and *Campylobacter jejuni*. Moreover, birds can travel miles from farm to farm causing a biosecurity nightmare. Overall, it is estimated that bird populations cause an annual

loss of \$100 million to US agriculture.

Before control measures can be discussed, laws and regulations regarding the protection of certain bird species must first be addressed. Federal and state regulations protect most blackbirds and other migratory birds. A permit is required to take, possess, or transport migratory birds. However, no permit is required to scare or herd these birds except for endangered species like bald eagles. Barn swallows are protected under federal law, which means nests cannot be removed once eggs are laid inside.

States have different regulations when it concerns lethal control on unprotected species such as pigeons, sparrows, or starlings. If a farm is ever in doubt about the legality of how they are controlling bird populations on their property, it is best to contact the state wildlife agency to clarify state laws.

The first type of control method that can be used is live trapping. Live trapping is most effective with small populations of birds. To be successful the trap should be placed where birds like to

TEST YOUR DAIRY FARMING KNOWLEDGE

- 1) In the summer, how many °F can be reduced from the outside temperature by simply providing cows/calves with shade?
 - a) 1-2 °F
 - b) 3-4 °F
 - c) 7-8 °F
 - d) 11-12 °F
- 2) Double ovulation is the most common reason higher production cows produce more twins. If a herd is averaging 88lbs of milk per cow, what is the average percent that will double ovulate?
 - a) 5%
 - b) 15%
 - c) 25%
 - d) 30%
- 3) In general, how long are foot bath solutions effective?
 - a) 150-300 cow passes
 - b) 400-500 cow passes
 - c) 700-800 cow passes
 - d) 1000-1200 cow passes

Answers on back

congregate and should be maintained regularly. Using a few live birds as decoys will enable larger numbers to be captured. Animals that are captured can then be euthanized.

Birds can also be controlled using aversion techniques that utilize ways to frighten the birds. These techniques need to be used early before numbers become excessive. It also requires dedicating enough staffing to the frightening program and to make sure these techniques don't inadvertently frighten the cattle. Examples of techniques that can be used to scare the birds are alarm calls, noisemakers, exploders, cannons, bright objects, laser beams, eye spot balloons, hawk kites and Mylar tape. The location of these devices need to vary to be effective otherwise the birds will get used to them. Some farms will use pyrotechnics to deliver loud noises at various times. While these are relatively safe, neighbors and the police should be informed prior to use.

Another method that can be utilized is exclusion and bird-proofing of the buildings. All the openings that can be closed should be closed. Other

openings greater than 1" should be closed with bird-proof netting or welded wire. Openings that do require people or equipment to enter can also be covered with plastic strips to allow people to pass but keep birds from entering. Roof vents can be screened to continue to allow ventilation but will still exclude birds. Potential perch sites within the barns should be modified by either changing the angle to prevent roosting or to attach porcupine wire (or a similar spiked devices) to deter birds from resting there. Any new buildings that are constructed should include designs to reduce or eliminate bird access.

Shooting of birds can be used with some success when it is permitted. It helps to reinforce bird-scaring and can be very effective for population control with smaller numbers of birds. Baiting birds will help to improve mortality. Safety should always be a concern when using any type of firearm.

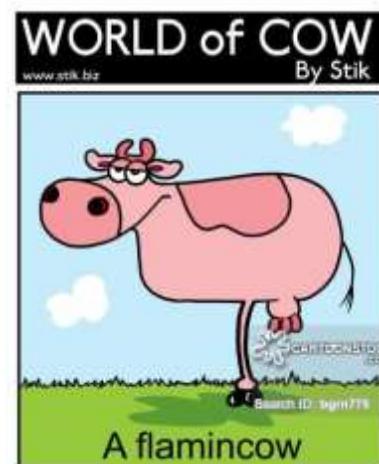
The final category of control is to use toxicants that are labeled for bird control. Pre-baiting in the areas that the birds like to congregate is the key to getting good control. Once the toxicant is applied,

birds will usually die within 24-36 hours. Toxicants should not be applied in a way that livestock would have access to the bait. Dead birds can be disposed in the trash, manure pit, buried, or incinerated if it complies with local regulations. The use of toxicants is usually regulated by the appropriate State Department of Agriculture. Specific questions regarding the use of any toxicants should be directed towards this department. Additionally, neighbors should be notified if toxicants are used since many birds will die off-site and may cause alarm. The common toxicants that are used are Avitrol, DRC-1339, and Starlicide Complete.

For a more detailed list of bird population control methods on dairy farms and livestock facilities along with recommendations on where to locate supplies look for an article from North Dakota State University entitled "Managing Common Bird Challenges on Dairy and Livestock Operations."

Farm Cat Spay/Neuter Program Reminder

This is a friendly reminder that Cedar Grove Veterinary Services has been running an in-house spay/neuter program for farm cats for the past 6 months due to a generous donation that we received at the beginning of the year. Funds are still available for any farmers that would like to control their cat population through spays and neuters of their cats. If anyone is interested as we move into the fall, feel free to contact the clinic for more information.



Dairy Farm Knowledge Answers

1: B 2: c 3: a

