

Propane Cannon Use in Coastal B.C.

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Farm Industry Review
Board

The issue

- noise from cannons used in blueberry fields one of the main complaints received by governments and industry
- Guidelines for cannon use have been in place since 1996
- a view that Guidelines need to be reviewed and possibly revised

FIRB study

- request from Ministry of Agriculture and Lands to review Guidelines
- FIRB under Section 11(2) of the FPPA decided to conduct a review and prepare a report
 - review of technical material
 - consultations with stakeholders
 - written submissions
- http://www.firb.gov.bc.ca/reports/Propane/09_May_PropaneCannonReview.pdf

What we heard from industry

- bird predation, especially from starlings, causes significant damage to blueberry crops
- propane cannons are an important control measure for reducing damage
- propane cannons alone are not sufficient; a wide array of measures are needed
- starling pressure is variable and there are times when no or very few starlings are present.

What we heard from neighbours

- explosions from propane cannons are very loud, interrupting sleep and affecting health
- the Guidelines are often not followed
- cannons are often used when there is little or no bird pressure
- cannon use needs to be reduced or banned all together

What we heard from local governments

- a great variation in responses
 - propane cannons are a non issue
 - propane cannons are a serious problem and the provincial government should ban their use
- enforcement; again a variable response
 - no problem to deal with non-compliance
 - not prepared to incur the cost of enforcement; it is a provincial issue

A universal response

- Nazam Dulat, the grower liaison hired by the BC Blueberry Council, does a great job.
- responds quickly and resolves many concerns
- he needs help

FIRB Recommendations

- bird population management
- guideline revisions
 - an individual on each farm to manage cannons
 - annual site specific bird management plan
 - daily visits to each site to ensure cannons are functioning properly and birds are present
 - ensure cannons firing within allowed hours of operation
 - bird management plan must include:
 - strategies to minimize use
 - details on use of other control measures
 - directions to use cannons only when birds are present

Recommendations (con't)

- local governments
 - where the issue is significant, develop bylaws for regulation of cannon use
 - adopt the Guidelines into these bylaws
 - assign an enforcement officer that can be contacted by BCBC at any time
 - should not pursue a ban on cannon until exhausted all others means of finding a resolution

Complaint decision

- McMurtry v Sekhon in Surrey
- Decision to be released soon
- **Take home message:** read the decision before developing your bird management plan for the coming growing season.