

FARM PRACTICE

INTERIOR BC WILDLIFE DAMAGE CONTROL

Description

Wildlife can disrupt, damage and harm agricultural crops and livestock, the land they are raised on and the infrastructure and equipment needed to raise them. Wildlife can also spread undesirable insects, weeds and diseases.

Numerous methods are used to control or reduce the impact wildlife has on agricultural enterprises. These include fencing, netting, scare tactics, repellents, trapping, the use of firearms and poisoning, habitat modification and cultural management.

Nuisance Concerns

The three main disturbances mentioned in the Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act are odour, noise and dust. Of particular concern to wildlife damage control practices is noise.

Noise

Farmers engage in a variety of activities that generate noise. Most equipment generates some noise. Noise is defined as any sound that is audible but judged to be an unwanted, irregular or erratic disturbance. Wildlife scare devices may create noise as a scare tactic. Noise may be generated continuously or intermittently.

See Nuisance Reference: [Noise](#)

Activities and Operations

Fencing

A fence is a constructed barrier intended to prevent the intrusion or escape of undesirable species. Common fence designs to protect crops from wildlife are woven wire fences and electric fences or a combination of the two. Electric fences along pedestrian areas should be posted with warning signs.

Habitat Modification and Management

Habitat that may be especially suited and attractive to wildlife can be modified or eliminated. Similarly, access to the food, water and shelter wildlife requires can be reduced or eliminated. Cultural management techniques such as mowing, cutting down weeds and plant debris, and removing breeding and hiding places are also effective. Land leveling or contouring to reduce water ponding may be effective in reducing the birds' attraction to a field.

See Farm Practice: [Farmstead Maintenance](#)
[Habitat Management](#)

Netting

Netting is used to prevent birds and animals from entering valued areas. Overhead nets covering the entire production area are normally used in crops that are harvested multiple times such as blueberries. Nets covering individual rows are often used in grapes and sometimes in cherries. Screens or netting should be incorporated in new buildings to keep birds out of farm structures that contain feed or feeding areas. Plastic strips can be used to cover drive-through openings in the barn.

Repellents and Deterrents

Repellents that keep predators away or reduce their numbers include, but are not limited to, the following:

- natural repellents including plants, animals and natural products that are unpleasant to unwanted species of wildlife and
- chemical repellents that repel unwanted species of wildlife.

See Farm Practice: [Pesticides](#)

Scare Tactics

Various devices are used to scare wildlife away from crop land, livestock and farm animals. The most common methods are:

- Audible devices including, but not limited to:
- propane-fired cannons or exploders;
- broadcasting general sounds designed to unsettle birds;
- broadcasting bird calls such as distress, alarm and predator calls;
- shell launcher (orchard pistol) with various shells (screecher and banger);
- motor cycles or vehicles; and
- people clapping hands, banging pails, blowing air horns etc.

Visual devices including, but not limited to:

- inflated owls and other fake predators;
- kites with likenesses of predatory birds such as owls, hawks, etc.;
- scarecrows;
- Mylar strips or flash tape; and
- scare-eye balloons.

To be effective in scaring wildlife, a variety of scare tactics should be used in a manner that prevents the wildlife from becoming used to the scare tactics. Farmers should monitor the wildlife, their habits and the crop damage and develop an integrated wildlife management plan to minimize crop damage and loss.

The following guidelines can help reduce the impact noisemakers have on neighbors:

- use noise devices only when required for the protection of specific crops and only when a problem is evident;
- operate noise devices only between dawn and dusk;
- where possible, aim directional sound-producing devices away from neighbors especially close to houses;
- maintain the devices properly to avoid continuing noise when exploders are shut off; and
- screen pens containing fur bearing animals to reduce attraction of birds.

See Farm Practice: [Mobile Equipment](#)
[Stationary Equipment](#)

Audible Bird Scare Devices – Interior BC Only

Audible bird scare devices can be annoying to nearby residents. The Farm Practices Board (May 1999), the Ministry (February 2002) and the Industry (May 2003) have reviewed this issue. As a result of these reviews, the Ministry has revised the guidelines for the use of audible bird scare devices. Audible bird scare devices are divided into two main categories.

Category ‘A’ bird scare devices create an impulse sound. Impulse sound is from impacts or explosions. Propane-fueled exploders or cannons are an example of Category ‘A’ devices. Firearms and shell launchers such as orchard pistols are not included.

Category ‘B’ bird scare devices are any other stationary device, not in Category ‘A’, which generate sounds to scare or disturb birds. Examples are devices that broadcast birdcalls or other sounds through loudspeakers. Firearms and shell launchers such as orchard pistols are not included.

Guidelines applying to both Category A and B devices are as follows:

Farmers:

- should operate devices only between one half hour before sunrise and 7:00 p.m. local time or dusk, whichever is of lesser duration (sunrise as provided by Environment Canada);
- should locate the device in a manner to minimize the impact on surrounding residences while maintaining bird control effectiveness;
- should try to alternate or relocate devices being used on a farm operation on a frequent basis to maintain effectiveness;
- should maintain devices, including timing mechanisms, to ensure they operate properly and especially not outside the recommended hours of operation;
- should use devices only as part of a grower-prepared management plan;
- should establish a local monitor person for each farm where the owner/operator does not live within hearing range of the farm where devices are used; and
- may use devices for the protection of crops between May 15 and November 15.

Guidelines applying only to Category A devices are as follows:

Farmers:

- should reserve early morning device use for the heaviest bird pressure;
- should operate no more than one device per two hectares of cropland at any one time;
- should operate devices with an firing frequency of no more than one firing per 5 minutes for single shot devices and no more than 11 activations or maximum of 33 shots in any hour for a multiple-shot device. Multiple shots from a device are considered as one activation if they occur in less than a 30-second period;

Guidelines applying only to Category B devices are as follows:

Farmers:

- should operate devices on an intermittent basis so that the sound is not continuous.

Wildlife Control

Sometimes it may be necessary to remove certain species or specific animals which are causing too much damage to the crops or livestock being farmed. Removal of wildlife must be done in accordance with the Wildlife Act as well as any other relevant provincial and/or federal legislation. Farmers should take all reasonable steps to protect their crops or livestock from wildlife damage before applying for permits to remove or kill problem wildlife that are protected. Please consult the Ministry of Environment for more information about the Wildlife Act. Removal methods include:

- trapping (both live and lethal traps can be used);
- crossbow or bow and arrow;
- firearms to scare away or kill wildlife; and
- poisoning with registered rodenticide baits and/or fumigants (pocket gophers, ground squirrels).

See Farm Practice: [Pesticides](#)
[Pest Management](#)

Legislation

Information on federal and provincial legislation can be found in Appendices B and C. Acts, regulations and bylaws that regulate or may affect wildlife damage control practices include, but are not limited to, the following:

Federal

The *Fisheries Act* protects fish and fish habitat.

The *Migratory Birds Convention* protects migratory birds.

The *Pest Control Products Act* ensures the safety, merit and value of pest control products.

Provincial Legislation

The *Fish Protection Act* protects fish and fish habitat by limiting licences in water-short regions and provides directives for residential, commercial and industrial development.

The *Integrated Pest Management Act* regulates all aspects of pesticide sale, transport, storage and use.

The *Wildlife Act* regulates hunting and declares and protects endangered species.

Local Government Legislation

Local governments can enact applicable firearms bylaws where in place.

Publications

Publications that provide further information on wildlife damage control include, but are not limited to, the following (refer to Appendix D for details):

British Columbia Environmental Farm Plan Reference Guide

BC Agricultural Fencing Handbook

Integrated Bird Management – Blueberries

Netting for Bird Control in Blueberries – A Decision-making Guide

Netting for Bird Control in Cherries – A Decision-making Guide

Netting for Bird Control in Grapes – A Decision-making Guide

Rodent and Bird Control in Farm Buildings

Rodent Control on Agricultural Land in British Columbia

Suppliers of Bird Control Materials and Equipment

Watershed Stewardship: A Guide for Agriculture