



Why killing geese isn't the answer

When Canada geese are deemed a nuisance or threat, they are often rounded up and killed—a process that is inhumane, ineffective and unnecessary.

Rounding up and killing geese is:

INHUMANE

Most roundups occur during the birds' annual molt (from mid-June through July), when they are growing new feathers and can't fly, making them easy targets. Roundups often include large numbers of young birds who haven't yet developed the ability to fly. During a roundup, wildlife agents set up portable pens and herd Canada geese inside, separating the adults from their goslings. Next, the geese are typically packed in crates before being killed by carbon dioxide gas (a painful and distressing death), often in small chambers on the back of trucks brought directly to the roundup site.

In other cases, the geese are trucked to slaughterhouses to be killed and processed. Because meat from federally protected birds cannot be sold, it may be offered to food banks to create the impression that the killing was a charitable act. However, goose meat is often contaminated with lead, pesticides and other toxicants, making it unsuitable for human consumption. Food banks often reject these donations of goose meat.

INEFFECTIVE

Roundups and killings do not solve conflicts with Canada geese. While they may clear a specific area of Canada geese for a short time, roundups free up prime real estate for more geese to move into as soon as the annual molt ends. The best way to solve conflicts with Canada geese is with a multi-pronged plan that humanely reduces the goose population and changes the habitat so it is less attractive to geese.

UNNECESSARY

Humane programs have been successfully resolving conflicts with Canada geese in many communities for many years. These programs use a combination of techniques to curtail reproduction and to keep geese away from areas where they're causing problems.



Components of a humane goose management plan

Effective goose management programs typically follow a seasonal timeline. They're most effective when they combine at least two or three of the following key components:

CURTAILING REPRODUCTION

Canada geese are often philopatric—when sexually mature, they return to the nest where they hatched. So, curtailing reproduction can lead to fewer geese nesting at a given site in the future. The most immediate benefit from curtailing reproduction is that adult geese can be readily convinced to leave because they're not rearing flightless goslings.

“Addling” refers to any process by which an egg ceases to be viable. Eggs can be humanely addled by oiling, removing them from the nest, or replacing them with dummy eggs. A contraceptive—nicarbazin sold under the brand name OvoControl—is also registered to reduce hatching and manage populations humanely.

Please see our *Canada Goose Egg Addling Manual* (humanesociety.org)

geese) for detailed information about how to addle.

SITE AVERSION

Site aversion—harassing or scaring geese away so they learn a site is not a safe place—is an effective technique for solving conflicts with geese when used in conjunction with an egg addling program. Site aversion efforts are most effective before nesting season in the spring and after geese regain their flight feathers in the summer.

The most effective way to scare geese away is with specially trained goose-herding dogs. These dogs work with a handler to convince geese they are not safe from predators in certain areas.

Lasers and other light-emitting devices specifically designed to scare birds are useful at dusk as geese settle down for the night. Scaring birds away from night roosts means they will start their day elsewhere.

Another option is to use chemical repellents. These chemicals can be dispersed as a fog or sprayed on grass to keep geese away from high-priority areas.

HABITAT MODIFICATION

The best way to avoid long-term Canada goose problems (and often the most cost-effective in the long run) is to change the habitat so it doesn't appeal to them. Geese feel safe from predators where there are open sight lines, so they can see predators coming, and where they can easily escape onto open water. To make an area less attractive to geese, use dense, tall plantings or stands of trees along shorelines to make a barrier between food and water, and locate ball fields and other grassy expanses as far from open water as possible. Reduce the total amount of lawn and reduce the young grass shoots geese like the most. Replace Kentucky bluegrass (i.e., “goose candy”) with other grasses, such as tall fescue.

COMPLEMENTARY COMPONENTS

Stop feeding: Do not feed geese! Human food is not healthy for them and geese will gather where they are fed. Even the best site aversion techniques will fail in areas where people feed geese.

Tolerance zone: Habitat changes work better if geese can go to a “tolerance zone” that meets their needs. Leave tolerance zones—and the geese in them—alone. Then geese will vacate zero-tolerance zones more readily.

Public education: Understanding geese can help foster greater tolerance, and public education allows people to play an active role in decisions. Successful programs incorporate early, open and ongoing communication between managers and the public they serve.

Find more information at humanesociety.org/geese.



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