

IPM Tactics for Managing Canada Geese

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School campuses often have abundant food sources, few predators and no hunting, making them ideal for Canada geese. Geese prefer groomed lawns adjacent to water, so schools with ponds or other water features are particularly attractive. Fertilized lawn grass is a preferred food source.

Canada geese can be migratory, or may be year-round residents. Once they have chosen a location to nest, geese will stay or continue to come back year after year and can be difficult to remove. Although research has not shown significant health threats from goose feces, the mess can render playing fields unusable.

Federal and state laws

Canada geese are protected under the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which requires a permit from both US Fish and Wildlife and the state before collection of eggs, harming of the nest, or any contact with the birds themselves. Harassment or hazing is typically legal as long as there is no physical harm to the birds, eggs, goslings or nests. Check state laws before beginning any management plan.

Don't feed the geese!

Often geese and ducks are tempted to stay at a particular location because people feed them. Feeding can increase conflicts with people and the spread of avian diseases. Canada geese are protective during their nesting season and may chase people, particularly small children who may be loud and make sudden movements. Adopt a strict no feeding policy and post signs. Keep information about the dangers of feeding wild birds on hand to provide to interested parents and visitors.

Habitat modification

If banning feeding does not work, make the area less attractive to geese by habitat modification. If there is a body of water near your school grounds, consider the possibility of establishing a barrier or buffer strip of taller vegetation around the water.

Geese prefer short vegetation around water, which allows them easy access to the water and a clear view of approaching predators. Plant stiff-stemmed grasses such as switchgrass or prairie cordgrass that remain tall throughout the winter. Trees and shrubs are also an option. Buffer strips should be at least ten feet wide.



When water bodies are present, fences and other barriers can discourage geese by preventing them from walking out of water to feeding sites. Barriers can be created from woven wire, wood, plastic snow fencing, chicken wire, silt fencing, netting, Mylar tape, or several strands of heavy fishing line or wire. The fence should be long enough so that geese will not walk around the ends.

If the water body is small, a suspended grid can be created to prevent waterfowl from accessing the water. Place stakes about five feet apart on all sides of the water and string brightly colored twine or wire between the stakes in a grid pattern.

If possible, remove islands or peninsulas in water bodies. These are favored nesting sites for geese because they provide more protection. Try to minimize open water during the winter months. Do not use aerators or fountains that keep the water from freezing, as migrant geese will be attracted to the open water and the spray from the fountains.

Harassment techniques

Consider noisemakers such as firecrackers, air horns or recorded Canada goose distress calls.

Well-trained dogs can be effective at scaring away geese during the day, and lasers may harass geese off water during the night. Be sure to check noise ordinances first. Motion sensor lights, dead goose or predator decoys, Mylar tape, and remote controlled cars, boats or planes can also be used to scare geese away. Harassment techniques will need to be used repeatedly whenever geese return and in a varying pattern so the geese don't become accustomed to them.

Several chemical repellants can be applied to grass in feeding areas. Methyl anthranilate, a grape-flavored food additive, makes grass less attractive to geese. Anthraquinone aggravates geese digestive systems and contains a UV additive that changes the appearance of the grass to the geese. This must be applied by a certified applicator. Repellants can be expensive to use in a large area and you must reapply them frequently after rain or mowing.

Nest and egg destruction

Canada geese mate for life and often return year after year to nest in the same place. It is permissible to remove nesting material only if there are no eggs in the nest. Repeatedly removing the nesting material may force the geese to relocate.

Anyone who plans to destroy Canada goose eggs must first register with the US Fish and Wildlife Service between January 1 and June 30 of the year in which the nests and eggs will be destroyed. Each registrant must also return to the website by October 31 to report the number of egg-bearing nests destroyed. Note: Some states do not participate in this registration

program or have different requirements. Check for your state's requirements.

Permits are required to destroy eggs, including by oiling and addling. The egg oiling method can be used to kill the developing embryo while keeping the egg intact. Food grade corn oil is applied to the eggs, clogging the pores in the eggshell and asphyxiating the embryo. Eggs may also be addled, or shaken to the point where the embryo is destroyed. Nesting geese will typically continue to incubate the eggs after oiling or addling, decreasing the chance that they will lay new eggs that season. Eggs can also be removed from the nest and destroyed. However, to prevent the laying of another clutch, the eggs should not be removed until they are 14 days old. To determine age, submerge eggs in a pail of water. Eggs 14 days or older will float. Eggs that sink should be oiled and placed back in the nest. Geese will aggressively protect their nest, so one person should distract the geese while another handles the eggs.

Trapping and relocation

In most areas, trapping and relocating Canada geese requires a permit and can only be conducted during the period when the geese are molting and are unable to fly (mid-June through early July). Relocation is only a temporary solution, and many birds will return to the previous location once they are able to fly again.

Permits can also be obtained to trap and euthanize Canada geese. This can effectively reduce a large population. It must be done with other measures like habitat modification so new geese don't move in as soon as the original group has been removed.

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