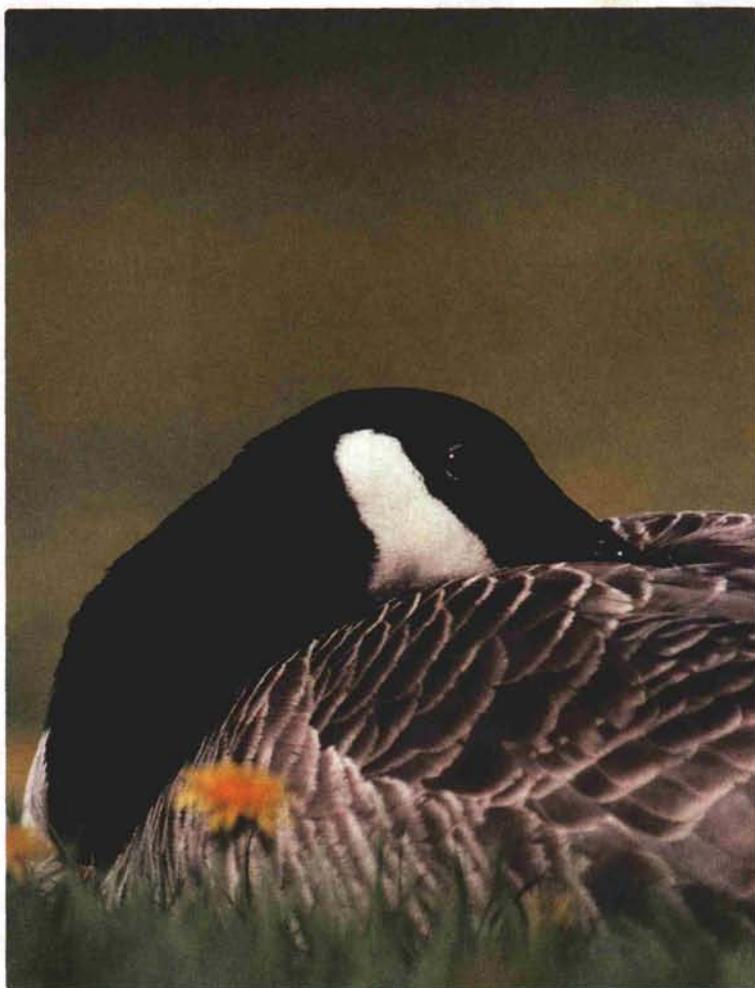


Goose busters

If the tried and true methods of goose control are coming up short, some new weapons can help superintendents to battle those feathered foes.



Their loud honking can be heard before they can be seen. Looking skyward, these large birds are spotted in a "V" formation, marking the change of seasons.

Each spring and fall, millions of migratory Canada geese make the long journey to and from their nesting grounds in northern North America. There are, however, millions of other geese that don't make the journey. Dubbed "resident" geese, these birds spend the entire year in the same general location.

The population of these "residents" has skyrocketed over the past 20 years, wreaking havoc on golf courses. In 1990, the population of resident Canada geese hovered around 1 million birds in North America; today, their numbers are approaching 4 million. This is no surprise to superintendents and golfers, as the population increase directly affects the golfing experience.

Federal and state wildlife agencies receive hundreds of calls each year from frustrated superintendents looking for relief from these pesky honkers. The complaints are mostly feces-related — a Canada goose can excrete 1 to 2 pounds of the stuff each day. Golfers who step in it complain to superin-

Jennifer A. Lynch

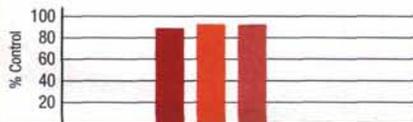
Disarm[®]

Protection From Tee To Cup[™]

Greens control with fairway affordability.

Brown Patch Control

L. Burpee, University of Georgia; 2006

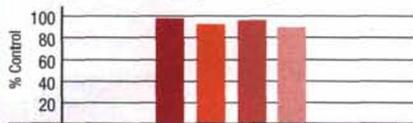


DISARM[®] (0.18 fl oz) 14 Day
Heritage[®] 50WG (0.2 oz) 14 Day
DISARM[®] (0.18 fl oz) 21 Day

Bentgrass; Product/1,000 sq ft; Percent Disease: 26%;
Evaluation Date: 8/24/2006

Pythium Blight

B. Clarke, Rutgers University; 2006



14-day interval

DISARM[®] (0.38 fl oz)
Vital[®] Sign (4.0 fl oz)
Insignia[®] 20 WG (0.9 oz)
Subdue MAXX[®] (1.0 fl oz)

Perennial Ryegrass; Product/1,000 sq ft; Percent Disease: 37%;
Evaluation Date: 8/07/2006

Gray Leaf Spot

R. Latin, Purdue University; 2005



14-day interval

DISARM[®] 480 SC (0.2 fl oz)
Heritage TL (1.0 fl oz)

Ryegrass; Product/1,000 sq ft; Percent Disease: 94%;
Evaluation Date: 10/02/05

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Arysta LifeScience

Harmony In Growth

gcm extra



Golf courses that have the most success with goose control are those that employ a combination of techniques. Photo by Scott Hollister

tendents and managers as they track it into clubhouses and pro shops. Courses spend thousands of dollars each year on cleanup.

We know why geese are attracted to golf courses — they provide large expanses of new grass growth (ideal goose food), and, usually, easy access to a water source. Knowing these requirements for geese helps us determine how to deter them. Unfortunately, there is no “silver bullet” when it comes to the battle against geese; however, with some effort, goose problems can be minimized. Golf courses that enjoy the most success are those that use a combination of different goose control techniques.

Dozens of nonlethal techniques can be used, including habitat modification, harassment, repellents, exclusion, nest treatment and live capture. With the proper permits, geese can be lethally controlled, as well. Researchers are constantly working to discover new and better methods to reduce goose problems. Here are a few of the latest trends to help stay a step ahead of these feathered foes.

Birth control

After years of research, the much-anticipated Canada goose reproductive inhibitor, OvoControl-G, was registered by the EPA in late 2005. This wheat-based bread bait, when fed to geese, significantly reduces hatchability of their eggs. It produces similar results as egg “addling” by preventing local goose populations from growing larger.

However, with OvoControl-G, it isn't necessary to spend time searching for the sometimes impossible-to-find nests. The bait is delivered to a flock of geese by broadcasting it on the ground. It's like feeding ducks at a pond.

OvoControl-G works by interfering with the development of an embryo. A goose will still lay eggs, but they will never hatch. Erick Wolf, the chief executive officer of Innoly-



In 1990, the population of resident Canada geese hovered around 1 million birds in North America; today, their numbers are approaching 4 million. Photo courtesy of Innolytics LLC

tics LLC, claims that OvoControl-G is 95 percent effective in birds that consume the bait. "OvoControl-G will not reduce your goose population," Wolf admits, "but it can be an effective long-term management tool."

OvoControl-G is a restricted-use pesticide, and a pesticide license is required to purchase and use it. Additionally, a depredation permit must be acquired through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service before using the product. Visit www.fws.gov/permits for a migratory bird depredation permit application.

OvoControl-G is currently only available from the manufacturer (Innolytics LLC). Visit www.hatchcontrol.com for more information.

Edge them out with bird balls

By eliminating a goose's access to water, a golf course can become less attractive to them. The use of "bird balls" is showing up at golf courses around the country. These hollow plastic balls act as a floating cover for ponds, camouflaging the pond from over-flying waterfowl. This low-maintenance alternative to grid wires also can help deter geese from walking directly into the water.

Laurence Schafer, a wildlife biologist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, emphasizes that the entire body of water must be covered with the balls for the proper effect. "It doesn't make sense to only cover part of a pond," he says.

Euro-matic, the manufacturer of bird balls, claims that they are unaffected by snow, maintenance-free, and last up to 10 years in conventional environments. And if you want your geese — but not your bird balls — to fly away, you might consider using the water-filled balls. These were specifically designed for use in high-wind areas.

Leave them in a fog

Methyl anthranilate is a grape-flavored chemical repellent that deters geese from feeding on treated grass. This food-grade chemical has many formulations, including an aerosol or a fogger application. Spraying the mist from a mechanical fogger works as an irritant to a bird's eyes and mucous membranes. Just like golfers, if the geese associate the golf course with an unpleasant experience, they will be less likely to return.

Ceannard Inc., the manufacturer of ReJex-it Fog Force, claims that the product works immediately when applied, but may require multiple applications before long-term results are noticed.

Beam them away

If geese roost overnight at the course, SEA Tech's Avian Dissuader might be able to help. This hand-held laser can spook geese from up to half a mile away. With repeated use, this tool has proven to reduce Canada goose numbers at golf courses in Illinois, and is more effective when used at dusk or dawn instead of daytime.

Nick McCraw, superintendent at Balmoral Woods Country Club near Chicago and an 11-year GCSAA member, has been happy with the results. Last spring, he reduced the flock on his course from 150 geese to 20 after using the laser every day for two weeks. "The laser scares the heck out of the geese," McCraw says. "They were bumping into each other trying to get away."

McCraw likes the Avian Dissuader because it's easy to use, he can haze geese from two or three fairways away, and replacement batteries (9-volt) are inexpensive and readily available. "The laser is not harmful to the geese," McCraw says. "I like that." The cost of the laser gun is around \$1,000.

SEA Tech is also working on an automated "set and forget" unit to be released later this year. The company boasts that the new design can force waterfowl out of a 500-yard radius.

It is important to understand the concept of integrated wildlife management, where a combination of several control methods together yields the best results. As the population of resident Canada geese continues to increase nationwide, superintendents must be prepared to battle to reduce impacts to their courses. For golf courses with goose problems, managing geese should be viewed as just another part of doing business. Look at long-term solutions instead of quick fixes, and act early, before geese can become established.

GCM

Jennifer A. Lynch is a wildlife biologist living in New England.