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## Assessment of bird-repellent chemicals in Africa

RICHARD L. BRUGGERS

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### Introduction

Chemical repellents have been used to protect crops since the onset of agriculture. Wright (1981) reviewed chemical repellents and gave a brief history of their use, derivation from natural plant substances, and an account of the sensory mechanisms by which birds perceive chemical stimuli. Repellents began receiving attention in Africa in the mid-1970s. This chapter reviews and summarizes the results of research evaluating chemical repellents for protecting crops from pest birds in Africa and suggests possible directions for future research.

### Phenomenon of repellency

Rogers (1978a) defined a repellent as 'a compound or combination of compounds that, when added to a food source, acts through the taste system to produce a marked decrease in the utilization of that food by the target species'. Schafer (1981) characterized repellents as 'tactile (chemical modification of surfaces), taste (chemical modification of flavours), physiological (chemical-induced illness), and other (primarily chemically caused behavioural changes over large areas not directly treated)'. Rogers (1978a) stated that, historically, no consistently effective chemical repellents have been developed for use against vertebrate pests, primarily because, until recently, efforts were directed towards finding 'bad-tasting' chemicals. This search was predicated on an anthropomorphic-based assumption that the human taste experience was directly transferable to birds. Although birds possess the same basic sensory mechanisms as mammals, it is naive to assume that their perception of stimuli corresponds to that of humans (Wright 1981). This approach led to laboratory screening efforts that resulted in many candidate chemicals for field testing.

Most researchers believe that a co-ordinated effort among chemists, biologists, behaviourists, physiologists, and other disciplines is needed if chemical repellents are to function effectively (Rogers 1978a). Understanding a chemical's mode of action, the sensory physiology of the bird, and its subsequent behaviour has become important to demonstrating efficacy data to obtain Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registration. Registering chemicals is such a lengthy and costly process—estimated at US \$15 million (Weidner 1983)—that it is impractical to develop new chemicals for minor uses on specific avian species (Schafer 1981).

Using repellents to protect crops from highly gregarious, grain-eating birds in Africa is based on the premise that not all individuals in feeding flocks must be affected to inhibit feeding. Because birds will learn to avoid food that makes them ill (Wright 1981), in some cases for 4 weeks or longer (Rogers 1978b), chemicals that cause a conditioned taste aversion would seem to show more promise as repellents than chemicals that simply taste bad (Rogers 1980). Conspecifics in feeding flocks also can learn to avoid treated food by observing affected birds (Mason and Reidinger 1981).

### Repellents tested in Africa

Chemical repellents have been evaluated in more than 40 demonstrations or replicated trials in 15 African countries between 1975 and 1984. The principal repellents tested in Africa included one that apparently affects the taste sense, Curb<sup>R</sup> (synergized aluminium ammonium sulphate, SAAS), and two that apparently cause an illness-induced, adverse physiological reaction, methiocarb [3,5-dimethyl-4-(methylthio)phenyl methylcarbamate, Mesuro<sup>R</sup>] and trimethacarb (80 per cent 3,4,5-trimethylphenyl methylcarbamate and 20 per cent 2,3,5-trimethylphenyl methylcarbamate). These studies determined the susceptibility of different pest species to the repellents and the effective application rates for seed dressings and ripening panicles. Application procedures were also improved and made more economical and residue degradation patterns were determined.

### General species sensitivity

Considerable variation exists in the sensitivity of African bird species to the repellent and toxic effects of the three chemicals (Table 19.1). All species were more sensitive to methiocarb than the other chemicals in  $R_{50}$  tests—the concentration at which 50 per cent of the birds are repelled in a single-choice test. Sensitivity data paralleled field experience, for higher application rates of Curb and trimethacarb were needed to obtain field efficacy than for

**Table 19.1.** Comparison of chemical repellent LD<sub>50</sub> (mg/kg) and R<sub>50</sub> (%) for several pest bird species. Sensitivities for all species not denoted with superscripts were determined in Bruggers *et al.* (1984b).

Chemical	<i>Quelea quelea</i>	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	<i>Passer luteus</i>	<i>Euplectes orix</i>
<i>Methiocarb (Mesurol<sup>a</sup>)</i>							
LD <sub>50</sub>	4.2 <sup>a</sup>	14.1	7.1	7.5 <sup>b</sup>	4.7 <sup>c</sup>	5.62 <sup>b</sup>	5.62 <sup>b</sup>
R <sub>50</sub>	0.02 <sup>d</sup>	0.11	0.18	0.06 <sup>e</sup>	0.08 <sup>e</sup>	0.18 <sup>b</sup>	0.13 <sup>b</sup>
<i>Trimethacarb</i>							
LD <sub>50</sub>	50.9	33.6	11.9	11.3	13.3 <sup>f</sup>	ND <sup>g</sup>	ND
R <sub>50</sub>	0.24	0.22	0.34	0.14	0.12 <sup>f</sup>	ND	ND
<i>Aluminium ammonium sulphate (Curb<sup>h</sup>)</i>							
LD <sub>50</sub>	ND	ND	ND	ND	> 100 <sup>i</sup>	ND	ND
R <sub>50</sub>	ND	ND	ND	ND	> 1.0 <sup>i</sup>	ND	ND

<sup>a</sup> Schafer *et al.* (1973).

<sup>b</sup> Shefte *et al.* (1982).

<sup>c</sup> Schafer and Brunton (1971).

<sup>d</sup> Shumake *et al.* (1976).

<sup>e</sup> Garrison and Libay (1982).

<sup>f</sup> E. Schafer, unpubl. data.

<sup>g</sup> ND, not determined.

methiocarb. Quelea are 4.2–11.8 times more sensitive to methiocarb ( $R_{50} = 0.015$  per cent) than Black-headed Weavers *Ploceus cucullatus*, Golden Sparrows *Passer luteus*, or Red Bishops *Euplectes orix*. Garrison and Libay (1982) determined  $R_{50}$  values for methiocarb of between 0.036 and 0.057 per cent for three species of mannikins (*Lonchura malacca*, *L. punctulata*, *L. leucogaster*) that are pests to rice in the Philippines. The  $R_{50}$  for *P. cucullatus*, an occasional pest to rice in African countries, is most likely in the same general range. Sultana *et al.* (1986) also determined an  $R_{50} = 0.18$  per cent for methiocarb for Rose-ringed Parakeets *Psittacula krameri* in Bangladesh where the species is an important pest of maize, as it is in some African countries.

### *Trimethacarb*

Trimethacarb is a carbamate mixture registered with the EPA as an insecticide. DWRC originally screened trimethacarb in 1967 on Red-winged Blackbirds *Agelaius phoeniceus* and European Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* and determined  $LD_{50}$  levels of about 10 mg/kg and  $> 100$  mg/kg, respectively (D. Cunningham and E. Schafer, unpubl. data). In  $R_{50}$  tests, the compound was rated as marginal but designated for possible reconsideration (R. Brunton, D. Cunningham and E. Schafer, unpubl. data). Since then, promising results from studies showing conditioned aversion by common crows to treated eggs (Nicolaus *et al.* 1983) reduced damage to newly sown corn seed by Ring-necked Pheasants *Phasianus colchicus* and reduced damage following topical applications to cherries (P. Kleyla, unpubl. data). Additional laboratory studies with technical grade material of better quality have generated renewed interest in the compound.

Trimethacarb has been evaluated only twice in Africa: on ripening rice in Mali in June 1983 and on ripening wheat in Zimbabwe in July 1984. These initial demonstrations and other studies conducted in Haiti, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and India suggest that it has potential both as a seed treatment at levels between 0.125 and 0.25 per cent (by seed weight) and as a head spray at application rates  $> 4.0$  kg/ha (Bruggers *et al.* 1984b). However, germination of wheat, millet, rice, and sorghum seeds treated at levels  $> 1$  per cent was significantly retarded compared to untreated seeds.

*Degradation* No studies have yet been conducted on trimethacarb degradation in Africa. However, in Haiti, following 4- and 8-kg (a.i.)/ha application rates in rice, average residues of 9.4 p.p.m. and 465 p.p.m., respectively, declined to 0.1 p.p.m. on the seed (both application levels) at harvest (Bruggers *et al.* 1984b). Half-life was 5.2 days for the 4-kg a.i./ha application and 4.2 days for the 8-kg a.i./ha application. Residues exceeding the  $R_{50}$  of most bird pests remained on the seeds-glume sample and the seeds-only

sample for 21 days after spraying. Chemical on seeds at harvest was less than the amount shown to inhibit germination, which suggests that sprayed seeds could be used as seed stock.

In the Philippines, trimethacarb residues on grain sorghum seed were 0.18 p.p.m. about 4 weeks after a 3-kg a.i./ha application and 0.68 p.p.m. after a 4-kg a.i./ha application. Comparable residues at harvest were found on seed sprayed either once (0.68 p.p.m.) or twice (0.42 p.p.m.) at 4 kg a.i./ha (Bruggers *et al.* 1984b). If more detailed and comprehensive repellency studies demonstrate efficacy, trimethacarb could presumably become more widely available and be marketed competitively (P. Kleyla, pers. comm.).

*Curb* Curb is a relatively non-toxic formulation with reported repellent properties to rodents, deer, and many species of birds (Stone 1976). In Europe, Curb occasionally has been used successfully against birds when applied as a seed dressing to corn (Leinati 1968) or as a spray to fruit buds (Stone 1976) and vegetables (Dar 1974) at application rates of 20–40 kg/ha. Alum-based formulations are bitter, highly astringent, and taste bad (Schafer 1981). In the United States, it has not been registered for use, nor do those North American bird species tested show much sensitivity to Curb.

Curb has been evaluated during the wet and dry seasons in Sahelian and wet coastal Guinean ecosystems, on several types of ripening cereals, and under varying levels of attack from at least 10 species of birds other than quelea that were resident during the trials (Bruggers 1979a). In studies at Bambey, Senegal, and Mitro, Benin, Curb provided some protection for between 7–14 days when applied at 8–10 kg/ha in one or two applications. At Sinthiou Maleme, Senegal, weights of treated sorghum heads at harvest were greater than weights of untreated sorghum heads ( $P < 0.05$ ). All trials in Chad and Cameroon in which Curb was applied against quelea at rates of 4, 8, and 16 kg/ha have resulted in very little, if any, protection (Park and Adam 1976; Park *et al.* 1975; Park and Asseginou 1973). In laboratory and limited short-term tests in the United States, a solution of 0.5 kg Curb in 2 l water provided some protection to grapes from House Finches *Carpodacus mexicanus* (Ewing *et al.* 1976).

### *Methiocarb*

*Seed treatment* Methiocarb has proved to be a consistently effective broad-spectrum repellent when applied as a seed dressing and head spray in many countries worldwide (Besser 1973; Calvi *et al.* 1976; Crase and DeHaven 1976; Dhindsa and Toor 1980; Duncan 1980; Guarino 1972; Holler *et al.* 1982; Mott *et al.* 1976; Poché *et al.* 1980; Rogers 1974, 1978a,b). In Africa, most seed treatment trials were conducted on rice in Senegal in the Senegal

River Valley, where Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax* were the main pests. Their numbers annually swell from about 10 000 in September to more than 100 000 during December and January (Treca 1976). White-faced Tree-ducks *Dendrocygna viduata* and Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* also eat newly sown rice. Seed treatment applications of methiocarb at 0.25–0.83 per cent (by seed weight) have resulted in more rice plants and fewer birds in treated than in untreated plots in all trials (Bruggers 1979b). The number of plants and the yield at harvest in plots sown with treated rice seed also were greater ( $P < 0.05$ ) than those in plots sown with untreated seed (Ruelle and Bruggers 1979). At rates of 0.25–0.50 per cent, no sick or dying birds were found; dead birds were found when methiocarb was applied at 0.83 per cent (Bruggers and Ruelle 1977). In another rice trial in Sudan, seed losses to crested larks and sparrow larks were 3.8 times greater in untreated plots than in treated plots (Hamza *et al.* 1982). Methiocarb residues from the dried samples of seeds and seedlings were all  $< 1$  p.p.m. (the level of detectability of the analytical method used) after 15 days, a 99.9 per cent decrease from pre-sowing level of 1100 p.p.m. Holler *et al.* (1982) also found rapid degradation with only 16 per cent remaining after 3 days and 6 per cent after 21 days.

*Ripening cereals* Initial studies in West Africa of methiocarb as a head spray to ripening crops at research stations were erratic yet encouraging (Table 19.2; Fig. 19.1). The results demonstrated how the success of a repellent is affected by the application rate, the type of crop, its location and maturation process, the bird species and their numbers, and the season of the year.

Protecting crops during the dry season at agricultural research stations is difficult. These stations are in effect oases that provide a predictable supply of water and food, and therefore attract large numbers of birds from the surrounding countryside. Although one application of 6.5 kg a.i./ha to millet in Senegal early in the 1975 dry season resulted in treated heads (4.0 g) weighing nearly twice as much as untreated (2.2 g) heads, some damage occurred to almost all heads in the field. Two applications of 1, 2, and 3 kg a.i./ha applied at the end of the 1976 dry season to ripening millet at the same location were completely ineffective. Three days post-application, 50–100 per cent of the heads in all plots were completely denuded and most of the crop was devoured before it reached the early milk stage. Such acute damage is characteristic of the end of the dry season, a period in the Sahel when natural food supplies are scarce (Ward 1965a).

During the normal growing season in Senegal, 2.5 kg/ha of methiocarb applied over the entire field protected ripening sorghum at Darou and ripening rice in the Senegal River Valley in 1975 (Table 19.2). However, applying methiocarb to rice in alternate bands was unsuccessful in the Senegal River Valley in 1977, owing to abundant weed seed in the rice fields,

**Table 19.2.** Summary of methiocarb studies to protect ripening crops from bird pests in Senegal from 1975 to 1977 (source: Bruggers 1979b).

Crop, location, (date), trial <sup>a</sup>	Applications		Yields or % damage	Main pest species
	No.	kg a.i./ha		
<i>Millet</i>				
Bambey (Feb. 1975)				
Treated	1	6.5	4.61 g/head	<i>Passer luteus</i> , <i>Passer griseus</i> , <i>Euplectes orix</i> ; 200–300 total in small resident feeding flocks
Untreated	–	–	2.19 g/head	
Bambey (Apr. 1976)				
Treated	2	1.0, 2.0, 3.0	93–100%	<i>Quelea quelea</i> (30%), <i>Passer luteus</i> (33%), <i>Euplectes orix</i> (23%); roost population of 1000–3000 birds
Untreated	–	–	100%	
<i>Sorghum</i>				
Darou (Nov. 1975)				
Treated	2	2.5	4%; 49.4 g/head	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i> , <i>Ploceus melanocephalus</i> , <i>Lamprotornis chalybaeta</i> , <i>Vinago waalia</i> , <i>Bubalornis albirostris</i> , <i>Ploceus</i> spp.; from breeding colony of 500–1000 birds
Untreated	–	–	67%; 15.8 g/head	

*Rice*

Richard Toll  
(Sept. 1975)

Treated	2	2.0, 2.5	2.05 g/head 206 ± 8 g/0.5 m <sup>2</sup>	<i>Euplectes orix</i> , <i>Quelea quelea</i> , <i>Ploceus</i> spp.
Untreated	—	—	1.91 g/head 149 ± 50 g/0.5 m <sup>2</sup>	

Richard Toll  
(Sept. 1977)

Treated	3	2.0	38%, 63%, 75%	<i>Quelea quelea</i> (80%), <i>Ploceus</i> spp. (5%), <i>Euplectes orix</i> (15%); 600–2000 birds each period all from pre-nesting or nesting colonies
Untreated	—	—	93%, 100%, 100%	

\* Trials were conducted on 1–3 treated and untreated plots of between 0.04 and 0.80 ha.



Fig. 19.1. Mesurol can be sprayed onto ripening sorghum heads to repel quelea (photo: R. Bruggers).

extended maturation period, and drought that simulated dry-season conditions. Both rice studies demonstrated the influence of differences in feeding behaviour of pest species and crop maturation on repellent effectiveness (Bruggers 1979*b*).

The initial field experiments with methiocarb in West Africa (Bruggers 1979*b*) and in eastern Africa (De Grazio and Shumake 1982) involved application rates of 3–6 kg/ha applied over entire fields and again gave variable, yet encouraging results. From these early field experiments, it was evident that in many situations bird damage was localized in fields along the borders or sheltered bush areas and often never reached the interior. Subsequent studies in eastern Africa employed economical application techniques such as edge, band, or spot-spraying (Bruggers *et al.* 1981*b*). Results from these studies also were encouraging (Table 19.3). Protection of rice at the Libya–Somalia (LIBSOMA) scheme in Somalia, sorghum in Ethiopia, and wheat at West Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, was particularly good. In these locations, the crop was either the only one in the area or was in the vulnerable stage at the onset of the trial. Inconsistent, although less satisfactory results occurred in a rice trial at the Agricultural Research Centre in Afgoi, Somalia, and a wheat trial at the Arusha Foundation Seed Farm (AFSF) in Arusha, Tanzania, primarily because untreated fields were im-

mediately adjacent to treated fields and held birds that might otherwise be repelled.

*Cost:benefit analysis* In the eastern African trials, birds usually began attacking crops along field borders or in spots and then moved into the fields, making edge or spot applications appropriate and economical (see Bruggers *et al.* 1981*b* for detailed cost explanations for each trial). The cost of applying methiocarb to bands at the 3-ha rice field at the LIBSOMA scheme was approximately US \$45/ha. Using bird scarers raised the cost an additional \$50/ha. With a harvest value of approximately \$375/ha and a 5 per cent loss to birds, LIBSOMA still showed a benefit of nearly \$200/ha, this is particularly good when compared with \$7.50/ha benefit from a 36-ha field that was 90 per cent damaged just before the trial, when bird scarer costs totalled \$143/ha. Crop protection using bird scarers accounted for 15–43 per cent of total rice production costs at LIBSOMA (Bruggers 1980).

At the AFSF in Tanzania in 1979, the yield for the treated field of variety Trophy averaged \$53/ha more than the untreated field, and the number of bird scarers in all trial fields was reduced by 50 per cent. In 1979, bird scaring costs for 60 ha of trial fields were between \$650 and \$820, compared to approximately \$1250 in 1978 when the AFSF lost 60 per cent of its crop (M. Mmari, pers. comm.).

At West Kilimanjaro in 1979, spot-spraying areas where birds were seen feeding cost only \$176 for the entire 1012-ha farm. The value of the yield was approximately \$70 000. The value of yields in 1976 and 1977 when methiocarb was also used and 5 per cent was lost to birds was \$267 000 and \$317 000, respectively, greatly exceeding the \$47 000 value of the 1978 crop when methiocarb was not used.

*Degradation* Using repellents on food crops requires an understanding of their degradation patterns to ensure permissible residue levels at harvest. Methiocarb degradation patterns have been determined on sorghum in Senegal and on wheat in Tanzania. In Senegal, a 2-kg a.i./ha application rate (with 60 ml of Triton AE adhesive per 100 l water) resulted in residues of <3.5 p.p.m. on seed after 20 days and a half-life of 6–7 days (Gras *et al.* 1981). Initial degradation was very rapid, and metabolic effects began to appear on the second day. The methiocarb  $R_{50} = 0.015$  per cent or 150 p.p.m. for quelea (Shumake *et al.* 1976), an amount equivalent to that remaining on grain 3 days after spraying. The time to treatment inhibition was 20–23 days (Gras *et al.* 1981). This time period corresponded to actual field application methods. Second applications usually are applied within 7–10 days of the first, leaving approximately 3 weeks until harvest in a normal 4- to 5-week maturation period.

**Table 19.3** Harvest results from methiocarb studies in eastern Africa between 1974 NS 1980 (sources: Bruggers *et al.* 1981b; De Grazio and Shumake 1982; Hamaza *et al.* 1982)

Location, crop, (date), trial	Fields		Application technique			Yield or % damage	Pest species
	No.	Area (ha)	kg a.i./ha	No. applications	Method		
<i>Somalia</i>							
ARC—rice (July–Aug. 1979)							
Treated	1	0.15	1	2	Applied to $\frac{1}{3}$ area in edge and centre bands	1600 kg/ha	70% <i>Quelea quelea</i> ; 25% <i>Ploceus cucullatus</i> ; 5% <i>Euplectes</i> spp.
Untreated	1	0.15	—	—		1700 kg/ha	
LIBSOMA—rice (Aug.–Sept. 1979)							
Treated	1	3	1	2	Applied to $\frac{1}{3}$ area in edge and centre bands	5%; 1500 kg/ha	90% <i>Quelea quelea</i> ; 10% <i>Euplectes</i> spp., and <i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>
Untreated	1	36	—	—		90%; 160 kg/ha	
<i>Tanzania</i>							
AFSF—wheat (June–Sept. 1979)							
Treated	2	12, 15	1	2	Applied to $\frac{1}{3}$ area in edge and centre bands	291 and 316 g/m <sup>2</sup> 1072 and 1125 kg/ha	95% <i>Quelea quelea</i> ; 5% <i>Ploceus rubiginosus</i>
Untreated	2	18, 12	—	—		280 and 200 g/m <sup>2</sup> 1293 and 639 kg/ha	

Simba/Poverty Gulch—wheat								
Treated (July–Sept. 1979)	25	1125	0.005	As required	Spot application	< 5%; 556 kg/ha	95% <i>Quelea quelea</i> ; 5%	
(1977)	25	1125	0.005	As required	only to areas being	< 5%; 1938 kg/ha	<i>Passer domesticus</i> , and	
(1976)	25	1125	0.005		attacked		<i>Ploceus rubiginosus</i>	
Untreated (1978)	25	1125	–	–		< 5%; 993 kg/ha		
Rujewa—wheat (Feb. 1974)						86%; 311 kg/ha		
Treated	1	0.05	3	1	Complete	5%	<i>Quelea quelea</i>	
Untreated	1	0.05	–	–	coverage	51%		
<i>Ethiopia</i>								
IAR, Melkassa—sorghum								
Treated (Sept.–Oct. 1980)	1	12	5.3 and 1.2	2	Alternate row	14.2%	99% <i>Quelea quelea</i> all	
(1979)	1	12	5.3 and 1.2	2	(5 m) application	22.1%	years; 1% <i>Ploceus</i>	
(1978)	1	12	5.3 and 1.2	2	to heads of $\frac{1}{2}$ area	5.7%	<i>melanocephalus</i> ,	
(1977)	1	12	5.3 and 1.2	2		< 2–3% after	<i>Streptopelia</i> spp., and	
						treatment; 23%	<i>Euplectes orix</i>	
Untreated (1976)	1	12	–	–		before treatment		
						42%		
<i>Kenya</i>								
Nanyuki—wheat (Jan. 1974)								
Treated	1	0.012	3	1	Complete	6%	<i>Quelea quelea</i> , <i>Ploceus</i>	
Untreated	1	0.012	–	–	coverage	50%	<i>rubiginosus</i> , <i>Euplectes</i>	
							<i>progne</i>	
<i>Sudan</i>								
ARC, Shambat—wheat (1980)								
Treated	2	0.25	1	1	Edge; ( $\frac{1}{3}$ of the	8.4%	<i>Passer domesticus</i> , <i>Ploceus</i>	
Untreated	2	0.25	–	–	area)	16.2%	spp., <i>Euplectes orix</i>	

Residue degradation following a 1.8-kg a.i./ha application to ripening wheat at elevations of 1500–2000 m in Tanzania (Ndege 1982) followed a similar pattern to that observed in Senegal. Much of the chemical and its metabolites (sulphoxides and sulphones) was deposited on glumes, and very little was found on the seed itself. Methiocarb residues in glumes decreased rapidly to about one-seventh of initial levels within 2 days. Chemical levels sufficient to induce repellency to quelea ( $R_{50} = 150$  p.p.m.; Shumake *et al.* 1976) were estimated to remain on the glumes for about 3 days after the first application but then fell to less than 15 per cent of the  $R_{50}$  level 5 days post-treatment. The half-life was calculated as 4 days. Methiocarb is registered federally with the EPA as a seed treatment for corn (maize) (Schafer 1979). Registration with EPA of a 0.25 per cent a.i. Mesurol 75 per cent Seed Treater on aerially sown rice seed is pending.

### Additional investigations

#### *Foliar and lure crop sprays, impregnated string, and baits*

Several innovative uses have been suggested for employing chemical repellents (methiocarb in particular) to protect crops from birds in Africa. These include: spraying roost vegetation or nests, spraying lure crops that ripen before the main crop, impregnating string with methiocarb and aerially applying it in nesting areas, distributing methiocarb-impregnated baits in crop fields, and enhancing repellent sprays with sensory cues.

Some of these ideas have been tried on quelea and other avian pest species. Because quelea will avoid white ( $\text{CaCO}_3$ )-coated seeds in the laboratory (Elmahdi 1982), consideration has been given to moving birds from day roosts near crops by spraying roost vegetation with this material. Ruelle (1983) has shown that damage to rice in Senegal and The Gambia can be reduced by spraying carbofuran on early maturing varieties in bordering plots; repellents could also be tried. S. Shumake (pers. comm.) has demonstrated that caged quelea will weave nests with string and he has established application rates for several chemicals that will impregnate the string and kill quelea constructing nests with it. A dispenser that attaches to aircraft and cuts string into desired lengths is used in insect control. Jaeger *et al.* (1983) found that methiocarb-impregnated sunflower seed baits would not stop Red-winged Blackbirds from damaging maturing sunflower; it seems unlikely that the technique would be any more effective on quelea.

#### *Sensory-cue enhancement*

Of those speculative uses for repellents in Africa, enhancing the effectiveness

of head sprays (particularly methiocarb) with sensory cues, has received the most attention. No primary repellent, including wattle tannin (Zeinelabdin 1980; Zeinelabdin *et al.* 1983), has provided consistent, economical protection when topically applied to ripening cereal crops. Apparently the toxic, emetic, or nauseating effects associated with a secondary repellent, like methiocarb, are necessary stimuli consistently to reduce feeding by birds (Bullard *et al.* 1983a). However, the conditioned aversion formed in response to the adverse effects of secondary repellents can be enhanced with the addition of inexpensive, tactile, visual, or olfactory sensory cues that are, or can become, primary repellents because of subsequent association with methiocarb.

Most research to enhance repellent effectiveness with sensory cues has been laboratory work. Quelea will avoid seed treated with methiocarb and taste cues of citric-acid (Shumake *et al.* 1976), wattle tannin (Bullard *et al.* 1983b,c) and colour cues of calcium carbonate (Bullard *et al.* 1983a). In fact, visual cues may be more important than taste cues in forming conditioned aversion (Capretta 1961; Gillette *et al.* 1980; Mason and Reidinger 1982). Starlings and many other species readily learn to associate visual cues with illness (Czaplicki *et al.* 1976; Rooke 1983; Schuler 1980). Red-winged Blackbirds display food aversion that lasts about 2 weeks (Mason and Reidinger 1982) as a consequence of observational learning (Mason and Reidinger 1981). Because opportunistic feeders such as Red-winged Blackbirds (Dolbeer 1980) readily learn to avoid foods associated with aversive consequences (Klopfer 1958), it is possible that quelea, as highly gregarious, opportunistic foragers, would exhibit similar response patterns.

Initial attempts to investigate sensory-cue enhancement of methiocarb to protect ripening cereals have been encouraging (Table 19.4; Bullard *et al.* 1983c). In field enclosure studies conducted in the Sudan in 1979, the median percentage damage to ripening heads of sorghum and millet treated with 1.0 per cent methiocarb or 0.5 per cent methiocarb/1.0 per cent wattle-tannin combinations was minimal and significantly less ( $P < 0.001$ ) for both grains than damage to untreated heads. For both sorghum and millet, there was no significant difference in damage between the methiocarb and the methiocarb/wattle-tannin treatments. Methiocarb and methiocarb/wattle-tannin also provided comparable protection to wheat from bird damage in the Sudan. The methiocarb treatment reduced damage by 80.3 per cent and 82.9 per cent at the milk and dough stages of the wheat crop, respectively; the methiocarb/wattle-tannin formulation reduced damage by 85.1 per cent and 97.8 per cent at the milk stage and dough stage, respectively. At Babougon Seed Farm in the Office du Niger, Mali, methiocarb/wattle-tannin suspension provided some protection to milk-stage sorghum from quelea. Bird damage at harvest was 75 per cent in a 250-m<sup>2</sup> untreated plot and <25 per cent in a 100-m<sup>2</sup> treated plot.

**Table 19.4.** Summary of field trials<sup>a</sup> comparing 0.5% methiocarb/1.0% wattle tannin and 1.0% methiocarb topical applications (both applied at the rate of 3 kg a.i. methiocarb/ha to ripening cereal in developing countries. Both repellent formulations contained 0.05% Rhoplex AC-33 adhesive (source: Bullard *et al.* 1983c).

Crop, location, (date)	Area (ha or m <sup>2</sup> )		Application technique	No. applications	% damage			Main bird pests
	Treated	Untreated			Methiocarb/ tannin	Methiocarb	Untreated	
<b>Sorghum</b>								
Mali (Mar. 1981)	0.001 ha	0.025 ha	Applied over entire field	2	<25	NA <sup>b</sup>	75	<i>Quelea quelea</i>
<b>Philippines</b>								
IRRI (Mar. 1982)	0.012 ha	0.012 ha	Applied to damaged heads	2	<2	NA	28	<i>Passer montanus</i>
UPBL (Apr. 1982)								
Site 1	0.03 ha	0.03 ha	Applied over entire field	2	6	10	32	<i>Passer montanus</i>
Site 2	0.03 ha	0.03 ha	Applied over entire field	2	4	34	10	<i>Passer montanus</i>
<b>Sudan</b>								
ARC (Nov. 1979)	8 m <sup>2</sup>	8 m <sup>2</sup>	Enclosure test	1	1	4	100	<i>Quelea quelea</i>
<b>Wheat</b>								
<b>Sudan</b>								
ARC (Mar. 1980)	0.008 ha	0.008 ha	Applied to heads on one side of plot	2	0.7	4.5	26.4	<i>Euplectes orix</i> , <i>Passer luteus</i> , <i>Passer domesticus</i> , <i>Ploceus</i> spp., <i>Quelea quelea</i>
<b>Millet</b>								
<b>Sudan</b>								
ARC (Nov. 1979)	8 m <sup>2</sup>	8 m <sup>2</sup>	Enclosure test	2	20	10	100	<i>Quelea quelea</i>
ARC (Nov. 1979)	0.1 ha	0.1 ha	Applied to heads on one side of field	2	2	NA	15	<i>Euplectes orix</i> , <i>Passer luteus</i> , <i>Passer domesticus</i> , <i>Ploceus</i> spp., <i>Quelea quelea</i>

<sup>a</sup> Trials conducted on one treated and one untreated plot at each site.

<sup>b</sup> NA, not applicable.

Although additional field studies and analyses of chemical breakdown are needed before recommending a methiocarb/wattle-tannin combination, initial work indicates that it shows promise for economically protecting ripening cereals from birds. The addition of cues that are detectable by the olfactory, visual, or tactile senses of a bird apparently enhances the effect of methiocarb. Dimethyl anthranilate (DMA), an inexpensive human food flavouring agent, is apparently unpalatable to birds (Mason *et al.* 1985) and may be another such cue that could be used with a chemical repellent or perhaps alone. By finding ways to lower the costs of chemical repellents without losing efficacy (for example, reducing the amount of methiocarb in the spray formulation and adding inexpensive sensory cues) and employing economical field application techniques (for example, edge, alternate row, or spot spray), traditional farmers in developing countries may be able to consider using repellents in some situations to protect their crops from birds.

#### Recommendations for use

Using repellents successfully necessitates a thorough knowledge of the specific bird problem and actual treatment timing and procedures. Adhering to certain guidelines should improve the effectiveness of chemical repellents.

- (1) Some damage must be expected during the conditioning period of the pest population; 100 per cent protection is not a reasonable expectation (Rogers 1980).
- (2) The likelihood of successfully protecting a crop decreases as the dry season progresses and natural food becomes scarce.
- (3) Effective repellents are not necessarily bad tasting; a pest learns to associate a particular taste with an adverse physiological reaction (Rogers 1980).
- (4) Because of differences among crops, repellents will not be uniformly effective. Better protection can be expected when treating millet or grain sorghum than when treating rice, because it is easier to deliver the chemical to the exposed grains of these crops. Because rice panicles often are surrounded by leaves, much of the repellent does not land on the panicle. Likewise, the seeds are protected by glumes that are not ingested by feeding birds, further diminishing the amount of repellent to which a bird is exposed.
- (5) With most cereals, at least two applications (one during the early milk stage and one during the soft-dough stage) will usually be necessary.
- (6) For a successful spray application, one must consider the physical characteristics of the plant (height, pubescence, panicle type), agronomic practices (row spacing, flooded or dry field), the climatic conditions

of the area (temperature, evaporation rate, rainfall, wind), and then choose and prepare the spray system and apply the chemical accordingly. Martin and Jackson (1977) have discussed these procedures and related practical application problems.

- (7) Considerable attention should be given to the timing of the application relative to the intensity of bird attack. Delays of only 1 week may be critical.
- (8) A particular repellent is unlikely to be effective against all species. Better success seems to be achieved with bishops, Golden Sparrows, and Black-headed Weavers, which despite being less sensitive to repellents than quelea, are still gregarious, yet feed in smaller flocks and inflict less damage before being repelled.
- (9) The repellent principle of learned aversion will work better in the presence of resident rather than transient species.
- (10) The possible effect of adhesives in masking repellency (Hermann and Kolbe 1971) has not yet been satisfactorily evaluated. Evidence suggests that this may, indeed, occur when a high ratio of adhesive to repellent, for example 1:3, is used at low application rates to protect ripening cereal grains (J. Besser and D. Elias, unpubl. data). Conversely, adhesive to repellent ratios of 1:1 have provided protection to seeded rice in flooded paddies at repellent application rates (Besser 1973). The results of the trials in Senegal confirm that repellency can occur when adhesives are used, and that they probably are necessary under conditions of heavy rainfall or aerial irrigation.
- (11) Trial designs in fields having untreated plots adjacent to treated plots seemed to retain birds that might otherwise be repelled, with additional resulting damage. Small, closely associated treated and untreated plots are unsatisfactory for the most effective repellent use. Additional considerations of test design and efficacy evaluations in developing countries are discussed by Martin and Jackson (1977) and Bruggers and Jackson (1981).
- (12) Birds often begin attacking crops along field borders or in patches along borders and later damage areas further into the field. Economical application techniques employing edge, alternate band, or spot sprays applied at the onset of damage often can protect the field.
- (13) Repellents can be more effective in fields free of insects and weeds. Insecticidal properties of methiocarb apparently play an important role in reducing crop damage by birds, at least in maize (Woronecki and Dolbeer 1980; Woronecki *et al.* 1981). An insect-free field would presumably be less attractive to pest species that sometimes eat insects or rely heavily on them to feed their nestlings. A shift by the adults from insects to grain and the subsequent use of the field by fledglings would seem to be quite easy and not unexpected. Likewise, damage is less

(Luder 1985a) and methiocarb protection is better (Bruggers 1979b) in properly managed weed-free fields than in weedy fields.

### Implications for use in Africa

Despite the encouraging results, research on and use of repellents in Africa have only been localized. Since 1979, a time when advances were being made to use methiocarb economically (Bruggers *et al.* 1981b), little additional work has been undertaken. There seem to be several reasons for this lack of interest.

First, the priority of the two UNDP/FAO grain-eating bird projects in eastern and western Africa has been to assist and strengthen regional lethal control operations. Although both projects stressed the need to look into 'alternative methods of control' (FAO 1980c), neither project has recently advocated using repellents. In West Africa, repellents have been dismissed as 'too costly', and efforts have been directed towards poisoning crops, employing ground sprays, destroying nests, baiting with poisons, and trapping birds (FAO 1982b).

Second, the inconsistent results that characterized the initial field screening trials in West Africa have impeded the acceptance of repellents, despite evidence from later trials in eastern Africa demonstrating more consistent protection.

Third, the feeling persists that repellents, when they work, only redistribute damage so that overall losses in an area remain constant. However, in many of the studies conducted in eastern Africa (Bruggers *et al.* 1981b), the protected crop was the only one in the area or in a vulnerable stage at the onset of the trials. Under these conditions, it can be assumed that 'repelled' birds shifted to wild seeds and perhaps insects, the only other available foods. In perhaps the only damage situation in which behaviour of 'repelled' birds has been systematically monitored, flocks of radio-equipped Red-winged Blackbirds frightened from vulnerable sunflower fields in North Dakota fed next, on 43 per cent of 56 occasions, in stubble fields, weed patches, non-vulnerable sunflower fields, corn fields, and swathed wheat; 27 per cent of the flocks visited cornfields but inflicted only negligible damage. The remaining 30 per cent of the flocks visited vulnerable sunflower fields usually within 19.3 km of the roost (Besser 1978; Besser *et al.* 1979). Similar studies need to be conducted in Africa to understand better the movements of 'repelled' birds and the relationships of alternate food sources and adjacent cropping areas to crop protection efforts.

Redistributing damage may have merit. Farmers are more likely to produce annually or even expand a particular crop if damage levels are tolerable. Similarly, it has been shown that many crops such as grain

sorghum (Beesley 1978), maize (Woronecki *et al.* 1980), and sunflower (J. Sedgwick *et al.*, unpubl. data) may compensate through increased weight of remaining seeds for minimal amounts of damage at early periods in maturation. Finally, a reduction in sprouting does not necessarily infer similar yield reductions because many small-grain crops can compensate for stand reduction by increased tillering. Reduction in yield of both barley and oats is not proportional to the number of grains removed (Feare 1974). Given that growth compensation is apparently common, it probably occurs in other cereals that quelea damage.

Irrespective of arguments supporting continued evaluation of repellents, individuals and organizations best able to promote their use seem to feel that because repellents will not protect crops in all situations, crop protection efforts should be directed towards improving lethal control methods. Because of this attitude, most farmers are unaware that repellents exist. This is unfortunate because repellents can be cost-effective. Those who have been instrumental in evaluating them recognize that they are not a panacea and that they will probably not supplant lethal control to reduce crop damage by quelea in Africa. Many situations exist in Africa where repellents can be used alone or with lethal control to protect crops (Bruggers and Jaeger 1982; Erickson *et al.* 1980). Repellents could also be especially useful to individual farmers, agronomists at research stations, and individuals at seed multiplication or production schemes when facing damage by small populations of quelea or other pest species for which lethal control may be impractical, uneconomical, or unwarranted. The importance of having both lethal and non-lethal methods available to protect crops from bird pests in Africa cannot be overstated.

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