

**United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Wildlife Services**

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Fact Sheet

**A COMMUNITY BASED APPROACH TO DEALING
WITH CANADA GOOSE DAMAGE**

January 2003

Introduction

Many New Jersey communities support large and increasing populations of resident Canada geese. Manicured and fertilized lawns, landscaped ponds and reservoirs, food handouts from people, and relative isolation from predators and hunters in communities around the State provide exceptional goose habitat. Canada geese are very accommodating to human presence and altered landscapes. They nest on rooftops and in parking lots, roadways, doorsteps, planters, and other structures near homes, businesses, hospitals, and schools. Geese are a valuable component of the urban/suburban environment, and provide enjoyable wildlife opportunities for many people. In some circumstances, goose aggression during nesting, accumulations of feces, and grazing of lawns impede the public's ability to use municipal and county parks, gain safe access to homes, workplaces and hospitals, and otherwise enjoy properties for their intended use. Individual property owners, however,

often do not have effective tools with which to successfully address problems associated with geese. Because geese freely move among properties, and commonly graze and rest on large grassy areas on schools, parks, and corporate properties, solutions to large scale goose problems are often best developed and conducted at the community level.

Geese are migratory birds that are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and other Federal and State laws, regulations, and policies. Techniques to alleviate goose damage are thoroughly described in a separate USDA APHIS Wildlife Services leaflet. An integrated damage control program, that includes a variety of different techniques and approaches usually provides the most effective relief from goose damage. Although individual homeowners and land managers can conduct goose control activities on their properties, the best approach may be to coordinate damage control actions into a community-based goose damage management program. In

some cases, depending on the severity of the problem and the complexity of proposed solutions, the community may enter into formal agreements or contracts with government agencies or private service providers to conduct some aspects of the program.

Community Actions

- 1. Initiate a Fact-finding and Communication Plan.** Determine the extent and nature of problems associated with geese, including the number of landowners affected and locations and impact of damage. Develop a consensus within the community regarding the preferred actions to take to reduce damage to a tolerable level. Some communities may want to develop a working group or task force of people willing to deal with the problem and proposed solutions.
- 2. Enact and Enforce a No Feeding Ordinance.** A municipal ordinance that prohibits feeding of wild and domestic ducks and geese is a necessary first step in reducing goose damage.
- 3. Conduct Goose Damage Control Activities.** Techniques and approaches described in the separate USDA leaflet, including habitat modification, harassment, sport hunting, use of repellents, and other methods, should be applied as appropriate.
- 4. Review and Update Land Use Policies.** Local land use practices that encourage development of lawns, artificial ponds and reservoirs, and that discourage hunting, exacerbate problems associated with Canada geese. In communities with goose problems,

these policies and practices should be revised and discontinued.

5. Reduce or Eliminate Goose Reproduction (Permit Required).

Elimination of goose reproduction by destroying and/or treating nests and eggs will reduce the number of geese associated with the problem site during the spring and summer, increase the effectiveness of harassment, and reduce human safety concerns associated with aggressive nesting geese.

6. Shoot Geese to Reinforce Nonlethal Actions (Permit Required). On large properties such as parks, golf courses, corporate properties, and farms, shooting a few geese each day may substantially enhance the scaring effect of nonlethal methods, especially pyrotechnics. To conduct this activity in New Jersey, a Federal/State depredation permit, a Firearm Purchaser ID Card, landowner permission, and relief from municipal firearm discharge and/or noise ordinances are required.

As early in the process as possible, the community should develop a goose damage control program that includes most of these six actions. A written Canada Goose Damage Management Plan should describe the program, listing goals, objectives, responsibilities, timelines, and costs. In some communities, conduct of these actions will substantially and satisfactorily reduce problems associated with Canada geese. In other communities, however, goose problems will continue despite careful application of the actions. Communities should employ, monitor and document the effectiveness of these actions and revise their Management Plan as appropriate.

Goose Population Management

In cases where the community wishes to obtain a permit to capture and remove geese to reduce the local goose population, the following guidelines should be followed.

1. Obtain community support of the problem assessment and proposed goose population management program.
2. Document the implementation and effectiveness of all previously-applied techniques.
3. Ensure total compliance with all laws pertaining to goose management and use of specific techniques. Submit a Federal Fish and Wildlife Permit Application to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for authorization to conduct the population reduction activity. In most cases, the technique would be to capture and euthanize geese during the June/July flightless period.

Community Notes

1. The community is responsible for writing the Management Plan and conducting goose damage control actions, although some aspects of the Plan may be written and/or conducted by government agencies or private service providers pursuant to funded contracts.
2. Costs to conduct all aspects of the integrated goose damage management program are the responsibility of the community.
3. Public opinion regarding geese, goose-related problems, and solutions varies widely.

4. Goose population reduction programs are usually accompanied by media and legal interest.

Legal Status

Canada geese are Federally protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The State of New Jersey classifies Canada geese as protected game birds. In order to trap, kill, relocate, or otherwise handle a goose or its eggs, a Federal/State permit is required. Permit applications are processed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife. Once permits have been applied for, inquiries about their status should be directed to those agencies. The permitting processes may require up to 2 months to complete.

Agency Contacts

To obtain permit applications, goose damage control recommendations, assistance in developing and conducting control activities, etc., contact

State Director
USDA APHIS Wildlife Services
140-C Locust Grove Rd.
Pittstown, NJ 08867
(908)735-5654/FAX (908)735-0821

To obtain goose hunting information, and to check on the state status of permit applications, contact

NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife
Bureau of Wildlife Management
P.O. Box 400
Trenton, NJ
(609)984-6214

To obtain permit applications and to check on the Federal status of permit applications, contact

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
300 Westgate Center Drive
Hadley, MA 01035
(413)253-8643/FAX (413)253-8480

Special Note: *Recommendations in this leaflet should not be implemented if they would be in conflict with the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*