

## Wildlife Services

Protecting People  
Protecting Agriculture  
Protecting Wildlife

## Factsheet

February 2011

# Management of Canada Goose Nesting



Wildlife Services (WS), a program within the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), provides Federal leadership and expertise to resolve wildlife conflicts that threaten the Nation's agricultural and natural resources, human health and safety, and property.

The program helps individuals, local governments, businesses, and others manage waterfowl to achieve an optimal balance between the positive value and conflicts that these birds may present.

The Canada goose is a migratory species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act ([www.fws.gov/laws/lawsdigest/migtrea.html](http://www.fws.gov/laws/lawsdigest/migtrea.html)), Federal regulations, and State laws. Two behaviorally distinct types of Canada goose populations exist in most parts of the country: resident and migratory. Since resident Canada geese are present throughout the year, they can damage lawns, marshes and cropland through overgrazing. Each goose can produce at least one-half pound of droppings per day. Large numbers of geese can quickly cause problems on athletic fields, parkland, and school yards. Geese aggressively defend their nest sites, which can lead to conflicts when nests are located near entrances to schools, businesses, or homes.

### Legal Status and Authorities

The Resident Canada Goose Nest and Egg Depredation Order ([www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage/waterfowl/50\\_cfr21.50.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/waterfowl/50_cfr21.50.shtml)) was issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in 2006 (50 CFR 21.50). The Depredation Order authorizes landowners and local governments who register with the FWS to destroy resident Canada goose nests and eggs on their property from March 1 through June 30, when necessary, to resolve or prevent injury to people, and damage to property, agricultural crops, or other interests.

In order to conduct these activities, landowners must register online anytime between January 1 and June 30 of the year in which the activity will take place. The registration must be renewed annually, following submission of an annual report of the number of nests with eggs destroyed. There is no fee for the registration. The process requires the application of appropriate nonlethal methods to minimize the extent to which eggs must be destroyed.

*A two-person team should conduct nest visitations. One should work the eggs, while the other wards off goose attacks using a shield, but never touching the bird..*



To register with FWS go to: <https://epermits.fws.gov/eRCGR/>. On the registration site, check to see if a State permit is also required by clicking on *State Contacts and Agency Information* or visiting: <https://epermits.fws.gov/eRCGR/DOC/eRcgrSCL.pdf/>.

Details on egg addling procedures can be found by clicking on *Management of Canada Goose Nesting* or by visiting: [www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage/downloads/canada\\_goose.pdf/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/downloads/canada_goose.pdf/).

## Treating Goose Eggs to Stop Hatching

There are three accepted methods of treating eggs.

**Oiling**—Use 100 percent food-grade corn oil. The oil blocks the pores in the egg's shell, and prevents further development of the contents. Some States require a pesticide license to use this method, so check State regulations before proceeding. Many people find this the most convenient method.

**Puncturing**—To puncture the egg, hold it securely in your hand, braced against the ground. Insert a long, thin metal probe into the pointed end of the egg. Best results are attained by placing slow steady pressure. Once the probe passes through the shell, place its tip against the inside of the shell, and swirl with a circular motion.

**Shaking/Addling**—Shake each egg vigorously until you hear a sloshing sound inside the egg. This technique may prove impractical for large numbers of eggs.

## Egg Oiling Basics

Once you have registered with the FWS, secure the following materials: data sheet to record information, a print-out of your online registration confirmation, pencil, permanent marker, 100 percent corn oil, and an applicator such as a spray bottle or oil-soaked rag.

A two-person team should conduct nest visitations. One should work the eggs, while the other wards off goose attacks using a shield, such as a trash can lid or broom. Never strike the bird; merely hold the shield between yourself and the bird to prevent physical contact.

Geese generally nest near water with a good view of the area and potential predators. Nests may also be located on peninsulas and islands, in tall grass near mowed areas, and near barriers such as walls or even flat roofs. Goose nests are round or oval, built of vegetation, with four to six eggs.

Once incubation has begun, the goose may be difficult to see. The gander may appear as a lone guard within a few hundred feet of the nest. Seeing a lone goose is one important sign that a nest is nearby and egg oiling should be started.

After locating the nest, approach with an attitude of confidence and control. The geese tend to be less aggressive if the team begins confidently rather than timidly.

All eggs in the nest can be treated at the same time if they are warm to the touch, indicating incubation has begun. Mark each egg with a permanent marker to identify which eggs have been treated. This is necessary if the eggs are cool, which means the goose may lay more eggs and you will need to return to the nest to treat additional eggs.

Once eggs are marked, apply 100 percent corn oil with a spray applicator or cloth. The oil should cover the entire shell but a thick coating is not necessary.

The oil blocks the eggshell pores to prevent continued development. The adult goose will remain on the nest beyond the expected hatching date, reducing or preventing the potential for re-nesting. It is not necessary to remove the oiled eggs later. The treated eggs don't harm the goose and the adult geese will simply abandon the nest.

**The behavior of nesting geese to humans varies tremendously.**

Enter your report at the FWS registration Web site by October 31 each year.

The adult geese may return to the area the following year, so keep a record of where you found the nests and go to the same area next year.

### Egg Aging Techniques

Although the Nest and Egg Depredation Order allows treatment at any point during the 28 day incubation period, some individuals may prefer to restrict egg treatment to the first 14 days of incubation. An “egg float test” can be used as a guide to determine the age of the incubating eggs.

The diagram below illustrates how eggs will act in water at different developmental stages.

#### Days of incubation:

Egg 1: 0–3 days

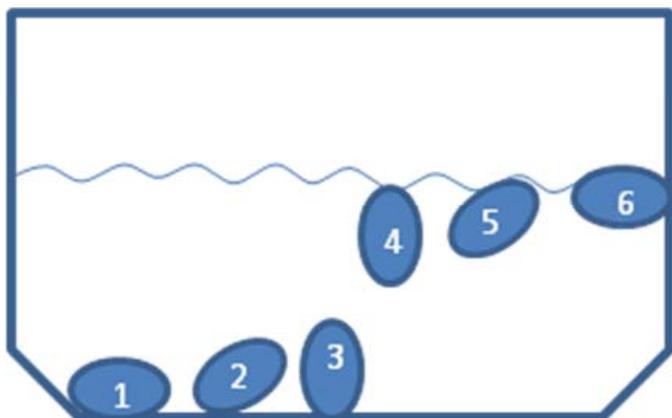
Egg 2: 4–8 days

Egg 3: 9–13 days

Egg 4: 14–18 days

Egg 5: 19–23 days

Egg 6: 24–27 days



NOTE: The behavior of nesting geese to humans varies tremendously. Review the information found by clicking on *Management of Canada Goose Nesting* or by visiting: [www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage/downloads/canada\\_goose.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/downloads/canada_goose.pdf).

### Additional Information

For more information, visit the Web site at [www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/) or contact USDA/APHIS/WS at 4700 River Road, Unit 87, Riverdale, MD 20737 or by telephone at (301) 734-7921. The local WS office can be reached toll-free at call 1-866-4USDA-WS (1-866-487-3297)



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

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