
MANAGEMENT OF CANADA GOOSE NESTING IN WEST VIRGINIA

January 2010

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act and State laws regulate Canada geese. In many areas of West Virginia, geese have become residents and no longer migrate. Problems associated with geese include accumulation of feces, grazing of turf on lawns, playing fields and parks, and aggression during the nesting season. An integrated goose damage control program should include habitat management, harassment, and no feeding. In some instances, control of nesting and removal of adult geese should be considered. An online registration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is required prior to conducting nest treatment methods and a USFWS permit is required for population control activities.

This leaflet is provided to West Virginia residents, organizations, and agencies who have registered with the USFWS for Canada goose nesting control activities.

Consider these facts when you are planning your activities:

1. A permit is no longer required to treat nests; to obtain authority one must go online to register with the USFWS.
See link: <http://www.fws.gov/permits/mbpermits/GooseEggRegistration.html>.
2. Any person registered must report the number of nests and eggs destroyed on their property and the date they were destroyed by October 31 of the registration year. *A report is required even if no nests or eggs were destroyed.*
3. Geese begin nesting in March, and most goose eggs hatch by May 30. The incubation period is 28 days. Geese lay one egg approximately every 1-2 days, for an average of 6-8 eggs per nest.

Management of goose nesting involves one of two activities:

1. Removal and destruction of the nests and eggs. Usually, landowners want to remove goose nests located in doorways, on handicap access ramps, in roadways, on sidewalks, near hospitals and schools, and in other areas that must be used by people since geese defend their nests aggressively. Removal and destruction of the nest and eggs should be followed by modification of the nest site to deter renesting by geese (netting, fencing, etc). Geese that are deterred from nesting on that site may leave or move to a nearby area where they will renest.

2. Treatment of eggs and replacement in the nest. Where landowners can tolerate a few geese, but do not want additional geese throughout the spring and summer, the treatment of eggs and replacement in the nest is recommended. Eggs can be treated by puncturing, chilling, shaking, or oiling*. After treatment, eggs are replaced in the nest so they can be incubated by the adult geese. The eggs will not hatch (if the process is conducted properly), but their presence in the nest will delay or discourage the goose from laying more eggs.

*Oiling is the recommended method. Coat the eggs with 100% food grade corn oil on the entire surface of the egg . Return the eggs to the nest.

Goose nests containing eggs may not be moved from one location to another. Field experience has indicated that a relocated nest is not recognized by the adult geese. The exposed eggs will eventually die, and the adult geese will build another nest, usually in the original area.

Once you have registered:

1. Locate the Nest. Locate and flag nest locations beginning in March. For large properties, record nest locations on a map (e.g. GPS).
2. Visit the Nest. Nests should be visited every 7-10 days, since geese will continue to lay eggs, and may renest after the eggs/nest are disturbed. Treat only those eggs that are less than 14 days old. Eggs that are less than 14 days old will sink below the surface when they are placed in a container of water.
3. Removal of the Nest. After at least 28 days of incubation the nest and eggs should be removed and disposed of in an approved/appropriate manner. (*Incubation of the eggs begins the day after the last egg is laid.*)

Special Note:

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



The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information should contact USDA's TARGET Center (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.