

Bird Control in Fruit Trees

Bird damage to fruit can be controlled by the following methods:

- 1) Trapping - Trapping is most effective if done when starlings and blackbirds first enter the vicinity of the orchard in the spring and approximately 30 days before the fruit first begins to ripen in summer. Trapping done within the orchard once the fruit has ripened will be far less effective and may increase damage. Traps should be baited with water and a variety of attractive foods-bread, shelled sunflower seeds, cracked corn, and chick starter. Some live birds must be placed in the trap and maintained during the trapping period. Trapped blackbirds and starlings can be anesthetized and destroyed with CO₂. All other birds must be released unharmed.
- 2) Exclusion - Inexpensive plastic netting can be used to prevent birds from eating fruit. Special 5/8 inch mesh netting is available in large rolls so that it can be easily applied with the help of machinery with a front end lift. For maximum effectiveness, run single strands of smooth wire along the top and sides of the rows of bushes to support the netting and keep it away from the berries.
- 3) Chemical repellents - **ReJex-it (methyl anthranilate)** can be used to repel birds from cherries, blueberries and grapes. Check current registration for possible use on other fruits. Dilute 1 gal. **ReJex-it** with 10-20 gallons of water. Spray 27-55 gal./acre of 1: 1: 0 mix and 52-105 gal./acre of the 1:20 mix. Repeat within 7 days if bird damage resumes up to the day of harvest if necessary. Use in combination with trapping and/or frightening devices.

Hinder has been used successfully by some fruit growers to repel birds for 3 or more days. Dilute 20:1 and spray trees or bushes with 50-100 gal./acre. Reapply after every rain and every 3-10 days as needed. **Hinder** is most effective if used in conjunction with trapping. **Hinder** may be tank mixed with other chemicals except mineral salts. Other repellents may be available in 1995.

All repellents are much more effective if used in conjunction with trapping and frightening devices.

- 4) Frightening devices - When applied properly and in combination, frightening

devices can be the most cost-effective way to protect fruit from blackbirds, especially in smaller orchards. Use at least 2 of the following techniques in conjunction with trapping and/or chemical repellents.

- a) Automatic bird scaring propane exploder cannons - Use at least 1 per 10 acres. Place on a platform higher than tree or bush height. Move every 3 days. Vary interval between explosions. Consider using multi-bang versions of the exploder and attachments that rotate the exploder with each explosion. Do not use before sunrise or after sunset.
- b) Broadcast of recorded bird alarm and distress cries -- Use 2 speakers per 5-10 acres or use mobile speakers. Broadcast alarm and distress cries are more effective if used only when birds are in the orchard and if broadcast from mobile speakers. Alternate the broadcast of alarm and distress cries with the broadcast of the sound of static, steam locomotives, urban traffic, etc.
- c) Motion detector accessories - Cannons and alarm and distress broadcast systems are available with motion detectors that trigger the devices when birds enter the field. Because the frightening devices are not operating continually, the birds are more likely to be frightened away and the devices should be more effective for longer periods of time.
- d) Electronic noise systems (e.g. Av-Alarm or others) - Use 2 speakers per 5-10 acres. Alternate the broadcasting of the Av-Alarm produced sound with the sounds of static, steam locomotives, urban traffic, ocean surf, hard rock music etc. Broadcast throughout the daytime.
- e) Exploding 12 gauge shotgun shells - Fire shells to produce aerial explosions over trees or bushes whenever birds are in the orchard. If possible, fire from concealment so that birds do not associate explosions with a vehicle, person, etc.
- f) Bird scare balloon - Suspend special bird scaring balloons at least 3 feet above the trees or bushes from poles or from lines between posts. Use tethers at least 2 feet long and place at least one balloon every 3-5 acres. Add more balloons if necessary. Vary height and location of balloons every 3-5 days.
- g) Bird scare tape - Attach special red and silver bird scare aluminum-Mylar tape to posts and stretch across field at least 18 inches above blueberry bushes and strawberry patches. Twist tape several times before attaching to posts so that the visible interval of red/silver is 16 inches. The space between tapes may have to be no more than 5 feet to 10 feet to be effective, but much wider spacing may be as effective.

In some cases, 1-2 tapes stretched across 1 acre are effective. Start with 1 strip of tape per acre and add tape as necessary.

- 5) Toxic baits - Starlings that damage fruit in summer often spend the winter nearby and consume livestock feed in feedlots. Both problems can often be greatly reduced by poisoning the starlings in the feedlots in winter with **Stadicide**. The use of **Starlicide** requires a DNR permit. Contact your county MSU Extension Office or USDA Wildlife Services (517-224-9517) for details. The chemical in **Starlicide, chloro-ptoluidine** or "**1339**" can also be used to kill birds in fruit areas. This use, however, is restricted and must be conducted under the supervision of the USDA Wildlife Services Office. It is usually difficult, to induce birds that are feeding on fruit to eat another food bait at a different location.

Avitrol, another restricted use chemical, can be used to frighten birds from fruit areas. **Avitrol**, however, is applied in bait form, and it is usually very difficult to induce birds feeding on fruit or bushes to eat other food bait at locations other than bushes.

- 6) Assistance from the USDA-Wildlife Services in Michigan - Wildlife Services can help a landowner, or groups of growers, with recommendations, sources of supply, trap designs, permit application, etc, especially on a large scale (i.e. a township). Wildlife Services can also help groups of growers conduct a damage control program (e.g. equipment loan, placement and operation, monitoring, etc., except for chemical application) provided additional funding is available for these services. For details contact: USDA Wildlife Services, 2043 W. Maple Rapids, St. Johns, MI 48879 (517) 224-9517.

Sources of Materials - examples

Hinder - Leffingwell Div., Brea, CA 714-529-3973

Bird Control Netting - Intemet, Inc., 2730 Nevada Ave., Minn., MN 55427

Frightening Devices - Reed-Joseph, Int., Greenville, MI 1-800-647-5554

Marco Supplies LTD, Site 20, Box 11, R.R. #6, Calgary, Alberta
T2M 4L5 403-285-9731

Electronic noise and sound systems - Av-Alarm Corp., Eugene, OR 503-342-1271

Signal Broadcasting Corp., Denver, CO 303-295-0179

Starlicide - local Pudna dealers

Avitrol - Avitrol Corp., Tulsa, OK 918-582-3359

- Bird-X, Chicago, IL 312-642-6871

- T.M. Agric. Chem. Co., Plainfield, WI 715-335-6543

ReJe

- R.J. Avantage, 501 Murray Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45217
(800) 423-2473

BLACKBIRD DECOY TRAP

Materials Needed for Trap

15 Pieces 1 x 4s 8 feet long

25 pieces 1 x 4s 6 feet long

4 pieces 1 x 1s 8 feet long

1 piece 1/2 x 16 in exterior plywood, 8 feet long

2 hinges

2 lbs. staples

40-ft. length of 6-ft. chicken wire, 1-inch mesh



“MSU
and materials
regard
to race, color,
religion, age,
beliefs, sexual
status, or family status.”

Extension programs
are open to all without
national origin, gender,
disability, political
orientation, marital

