



Nuisance Canada Geese



Got Canada Geese? We might be able to help! There are two distinct subspecies of Canada Geese in Delaware.

If you see geese on your property during the summer months, you likely have Resident Canada Geese which don't migrate seasonally. These geese are more adjusted to human activities, have larger clutch sizes, and higher annual survival rates than their migratory counterparts. Resident populations in Delaware have been increasing over the last 30 years and are not a conservation concern, but rather a nuisance wildlife concern.

The other Canada Goose subspecies in Delaware are Migratory Canada Geese from the Atlantic Population. These geese breed around the arctic circle in Northern Quebec and spend the months of October to March wintering in the Delmarva Peninsula.

If you only see Canada Geese during the winter months, you may have visiting migratory geese rather than residents, or possibly both. Because of their life histories, migrant geese are much more susceptible to environmental factors like weather and human pressures like hunting.

This population of Canada Geese does have serious conservation concerns, and their populations frequently fluctuate to lows that change hunting harvest bag limits. There are no state-issued permits available to control migrant Canada Geese in Delaware, but the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services may provide additional technical assistance with migrant Canada Geese and other species of protected wildlife such as vultures and snow geese when causing nuisance.

If you're experiencing Canada Goose crop damage on your agricultural lands during the spring and summer months, the DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife offers Resident Canada Goose Depredation permits that enable the permit holder to control Resident Canada Goose on their specifically permitted properties. This includes egg-oiling, nest destruction, aggressive forms of hazing including lethal take and roundups of live (usually flightless) geese to depopulate them between March 15 and August 31 each year.

If you're an agricultural landowner with nuisance Canada Geese, contact the Division at 302-735-8683 to be considered for this permit, but please have your Tax Parcel ID numbers available for all properties upon which you would like to conduct goose control.

Please note that **only the landowner or a specifically designated agent will be issued a permit for the properties listed in the application.** The dates of this permit are specifically designed to protect migrant Canada Geese (which are gone at this time) while controlling Resident Canada Geese and must be strictly followed to avoid serious criminal charges and fines.

If you're not an agricultural landowner or are otherwise unwillingly hosting any Canada Geese, Snow Geese, or other waterfowl during the fall and winter (non-permit) months, you are still able to non-lethally haze geese and other waterfowl (such as ducks and snow geese) using a variety of methods listed below.

Lethal control during this period from September 1 to March 14 is typically only available in the form of hosting waterfowl hunters (when hunting seasons allow) on your property, or as part of a specific agreement (Federal permit) between DE nuisance wildlife control operators (NWCO) or USDA Wildlife Services and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). A similar pathway can be considered for those who feel they have nuisance waterfowl creating human health concerns to drinking water, persons, property, etc.

Non-Lethal Hazing Methods and Strategies

Auditory

Propane Cannons (Zon, Reed Joseph) – Variety of models, some can be programmed to change direction and timing as well as operate autonomously. Most effective when moved every few days and frequency of blasts are randomized or spaced out. Can become ineffective with routine use.

Pyrotechnics (Reed Joseph) – 15mm pistol launcher with whistle/report cartridges, 12-gauge pyrotechnic shells, and 18mm CAPA launcher. Effective when used as infrequently as possible. Requires labor and has risks with fire and hazards to proximity of use. Caution should be excised when using these in suburban areas, check local ordinances before use.

Projected Electronic Sound (BirdX, LRAD) – Auditory sounds or sirens designed to dissuade bird presence, distress calls, noisemakers, etc. Can quickly form habituation and should be used with other methods and variety.

Visual

Flagging (Mylar tape, bright flags, balloons) – reflective tapes, bright colored flags, and balloons can make effective deterrent to landing/occupation. Snow Geese can be deterred

from fields using white and black flags made from 30x60" garbage bags on 4' stakes. Flags should be placed at a density of 1 per acre of field.

Lasers (Avian Systems Corporation) – can be handheld or automated, used to sweep birds off fields at dawn and dusk at long ranges. Can be very effective with other methods as it is limited to dusk/dawn. Handheld lasers are a cheaper alternative to automated systems yet need human attention and consistent use.

Predators (Dogs, coyote/raptor decoys) – Dogs are not allowed to harm geese, and decoys must be moved frequently, to avoid waterfowl habituation. "Wacky-inflatable-flailing-tube-man" have proven to be a uniquely effective solution for keeping birds out of specific areas - [available here and elsewhere](#). Geese that have become habituated to humans and pets will need harassment paired with decoys. A coyote decoy mounted to an R/C car may be a method used that pairs decoys and harassment by giving a visually of a predator.

R/C Vehicles (Cars, Aircraft, Boats) – a variety of remote-controlled boats, drones, and cars have been shown to effectively haze geese from undesirable roosting locations. This is not automatable to the extent of requiring no human labor but can easily achieve long range results quickly. Caution should be taken when operating unmanned aerial systems, the potential for collision is high when hazing large flocks of geese.

Physical Barriers and Landscaping

Physical Barriers (Snow Fence, Monofilament, Cable) – can be used to prevent geese and other waterfowl from accessing water or food resources, making a property less desirable for waterfowl use. Netting or wire mesh can help protect specific points of concern but can be expensive over larger areas.

Landscaping (Trees, Rocks, Vegetation) – The types of vegetation planted can prevent/inhibit access for waterfowl, such as trees, bushes, and tall grasses, or rocky perimeters around field and ponds. Placement of trees and shrubs in yards has been shown effective to keep geese out of yards. The presence of shrubs and trees that potentially can harbor predators decreases the safe feeling for geese in suburban yards and neighborhoods.

Final Note

The above solutions must be continuously practiced, as there is no final fix all solution to nuisance geese issues. A combination of the above practices is the best method to approach as the "silver bullet" does not exist. A continued efforts and management of property will create a long-term management solution that will greatly reduce the goose and human conflict that is occurring.

More information on these techniques and more can be found [on the USDA website](#).

Contact a Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator

1. Goto Wildlifehelp.org
2. Select Delaware in the dropdown in the middle of the page.
3. Select “Find a Professional.”
4. All listed Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators that are shown are licensed in Delaware and can be contacted for a variety of nuisance wildlife issues.

Research on Nuisance Geese

Paul D Curtis, Lynn A Braband, Management of Nuisance Geese on School Properties and Public Spaces, *Journal of Integrated Pest Management*, Volume 13, Issue 1, 2022, 28, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jipm/pmac025>

Gosser, A. L., M. R. Conover, and T. A. Messmer. 1997. Managing problems caused by urban Canada geese. Jack H. Berryman Institute Publication No. 12. Utah State University, Logan.

Titchenell, M., & Lynch, W., Jr. (2010). Coping with Canada geese: Conflict management and damage prevention strategies. *Fact Sheet, Agriculture and Natural Resources, W-3-10*. <https://www.ohiogeesecontrol.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/OSUExtension-2010.pdf>