

# MANAGEMENT OF CANADA GEESE AT



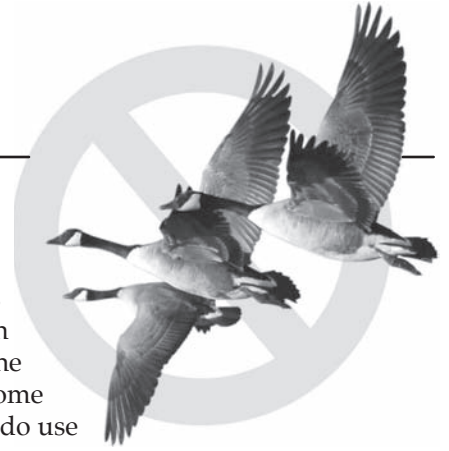
## Bank BALLPARK

By Dan Turner

A golf course superintendent recently asked me what the number one pest problem is that we face at TD Bank Ballpark. They probably expected to hear a response of some turf disease or insect problem but the greatest pest we face is the damage caused by *Branta canadensis* or Canada geese. Whereas a turf disease can be treated with a one-time solution such as a spray application or aeration, geese become an every day problem that continues for months. When left unchecked, geese will eat turf down to the crowns, dig holes in the ground and leave behind a large amount of waste. As a result, turf quality for early spring games is greatly reduced and may also cause health concerns for both athletes and employees on the field. Additionally, fertilizing the turf to recover from the Canada geese damage leads to excess growth in late spring and an increase in high nitrogen diseases such as leaf spot and summer patch. During the baseball season they do not pose a threat since we have events on the field most days, but when activities stop from late fall to early spring they become a problem. One of our challenges is that they feed at dusk and dawn so we never see them, only the damage to the turf they leave behind. We also have found that on weekends when there are no cars in the parking lots both the number of geese that feed and the duration of time they are there increases significantly. This meant that we needed to come up with a solution that would control them even when we were not present.

Over the past few years we have tried several different approaches with limited success; however, now have a system that provides good control. The main thing we do is set up a grid pattern on the field after the last mowing using rebar and string lines so that it is difficult for them to land and walk around. Geese require a large space to land and fly since they need a running start. Though this might not be practical with multiple fields, it may be possible to grid a baseball infield or any high profile areas where you have zero tolerance for them. We set our string lines about 18" off the ground and use a zigzag pattern to break up the space. We also have a Goose Buster machine from Bird-X that makes geese distress calls, gunshots, and coyote sounds based off of a timer. We set it for dusk and dawn on weekends when we are not at

the stadium. One key to audio deterrents is to use them on an infrequent basis so the geese do not become accustomed to it. We do use lifelike coyotes and foxes on the field that we will move around but have found that without the string lines, the geese will get used to them and actually will feed more often in those areas where you have them positioned. I will also make random visits to the field to monitor their activity and chase them out. This is useful when they first start feeding because they are easily moved at that point. Once they become established they are much harder to scare-off. Though this may mean a few early morning or weekend visits, I prefer that to spending a full day cleaning up after them for the first game. Finally, when we do get to our games in March, since we will have to remove all of the string lines, coyotes, etc., we will run



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one application of Flight Control after the field has been cut to provide additional control until we get into our season.

Overall it seems that while none of these methods used individually works very well for a long period of time, when multiple methods are used simultaneously we have gotten excellent results. In past years we used our Goosen Vac on the field each spring to clean up and would get 2-3 loads of waste. With our current control measures in place last winter we only had to clean up an amount equal to one five-gallon bucket. As a result our spring fertilizer inputs have been reduced by 60% while our overall turf quality, density, and color have increased. This leads to a better field and a better bottom line.

*Dan Purner is Head Groundskeeper, Somerset Patriots, Bridgewater, NJ and SFMANJ Member. He is a graduate of both the Country College of Morris LHT program and the Rutgers Turf program.*

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