

Controlling critters to net more profits

Moles? Geese? Rats? From traps to 'porcupine wire,' here are some control aids.

by James E. Guyette
Contributing Editor

■ Uninvited critters that come a-callin' can wreak havoc on any landscape, golf course or athletic field. Fortunately, innovations abound, giving you an increasing array of impressive tools to bait, trap and exclude unwanted visitors. However, you may find yourself under increasing pressure from customers to do away with any pests in a humane manner.

"Exclusion" is rapidly becoming a technique of choice. This merely involves keeping the animals at bay before they even set paw on the property. (Any land-



scape manager who's been vexed by a vole can tell you that exclusion is better than trying to rout an already entrenched rodent.)

For larger animal pests, a new line of Get Away repellents from IntAgra Inc. uses all-natural ingredients that repel by both taste and odor without being offensive to humans. It reportedly keeps away deer,



Fire ants (mound, above) can be terrible pests in the southern landscape. If left untreated, they can injure humans, too (left photo).

rabbits, squirrels, raccoons, dogs and cats. Other manufacturers are nosing into the field with similar products.

Rodents can be a particular concern to homeowners fearful of the much-publicized Hantavirus. Sonic Technology's PestChaser Ultra-sonic Rodent Repeller uses a highpitched noise that hurts the animals' ears while remaining un-heard by humans.

The battery-powered, lunchbox-sized Rat Zapper from Agrizap uses a jolt of electricity to dispatch rodents. It is considered humane because death comes quickly.

Traps and poisons were causing adverse customer reaction among the clients of the Morehart Mercantile Corp. outlets in California, so owners Marty and Patricia



Rodent bait stations like this one from Bell Laboratories, are excellent for getting rid of rats and mice.

Morehart switched to the Rat Zapper. "We are rat- and mouse-free, and we have also used the Rat Zapper in our home as well as on our ranch with equal results," they note.

Birds and geese—For Bill Stout, president of Stout's Pest and Weed Control in Mountain View, Calif., birds were a prime source of irritation to his clients. He found that birds stayed away after he affixed stainless steel "porcupine wire"

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from Cat Claw to gutters, chimneys, awnings and wherever else the birds were likely to rest. They are not harmed, yet the sharp spines ruin any roosting plans.

"It's a long-term solution versus the gels that we used in the past," Stout states. "It's good and clean and the people don't notice that it is there," he points out.

Geese that present problems on golf courses can be given the heave-ho by strategically placing a tough netting product from GridTech. Geese use ponds as a source of protection, and when they are denied access they leave.

"When the G-Grid is installed, the geese can no longer get from the water to the grazing site and then back for protection," explains GridTech's Tom Suprock. "They won't be able to see it from the clubhouse because it's virtually invisible, but the geese can see it," he notes. "The geese will swim back and forth for hours looking for a hole in the fence." It irritates the birds and causes them to move somewhere else, Suprock says, noting that the geese netting is considerably more sturdy than standard bird netting used on trees.

His company also markets a similar netting product that is imbedded in the ground to thwart burrowing rodents. It's being used under the runways at O'Hare Airport in Chicago.

Trapping—To trap pest animals, "you should be licensed and bonded," according to Jim Williams of Jim's Trapping Service in Sublimity, Ore.

Landscape managers need to make sure they are properly covered for any liability that may arise out of a trapping effort. A neighbor's dog getting caught in a trap meant for a mole, gopher or other pest can be a costly adventure.

Trapping skills are best obtained by hands-on experience, and would-be trappers are urged to attend trapping seminars sponsored by equipment suppliers or extension agencies.

Trapping is not the quickest type of service to offer. "It takes a lot of time," says Williams. It's tough to learn, and it's tough

Selected landscape-oriented pest control product suppliers

American Cyanamid Co.

Wayne, NJ 07470
(201) 831-3573
fire ant controls

Argizap Inc.

1860 Eastman Ave.
Ventura, CA 93003
(800) 946-7437
electronic pest killers

Bell Laboratories Inc.

3699 Kinsman Blvd.
Madison, WI 53704
(608) 241-0202
*rodent control products,
tracking powder*

Burlington Scientific

222 Sherwood Ave.
Farmingdale, NY 11735
(516) 694-9000
yard animal repellents

Cat Claw Inc.

2710 Bedford St.
Johnstown, PA 15904
(814) 266-5544
(800) 832-2473
bird control wire

Chase-A-Way Inc.

1187 E. 156th St.
The Bronx, NY 10474
(718) 861-0100
(800) 831-4308
personal insect repellents

Ciba Turf & Ornamental

P.O. Box 18300
Greensboro, NC 27419
(910) 547-1160
*insecticides,
fire ant controls*

Cinch Trap Co.

P.O. Box 130
Hubbard, OR 97032
(800) 841-5676
gopher, mole traps

Fas Technologies

1550 Walnut St. #5
Berkeley, CA 94709
(510) 849-4234
biological insect controls

Gempler's

211 Blue Mounds Rd.
P.O. Box 270
Mt. Horeb, WI 53572
(608) 437-4883
*trapping equipment,
insecticides, rodenticides*

GridTech

294 Valley Rd.
Middletown, RI 02842
(401) 849-7920
(800) 959-7920
bird, waterfowl netting

IntAgra Inc.

8500 Pillsbury Ave. S
Minneapolis, MN 55420
(800) 468-2472
animal repellents

R.J. Advantase

501 Murray Rd.
Cincinnati, OH 45217
(513) 242-3300
geese repellent for grass

Sonic Technology Prod.

120 Richardson St.
Grass Valley, CA 95945
(916) 272-4607
(800) 247-5548
ultrasonic pest repellers

Target Specialty Prod.

15415 Marquardt Ave.,
Santa Fe Springs, CA
90670
(310) 802-2238
chemical controls

Valent

P.O. Box 8025
Walnut Creek, CA 94596
(510) 256-2700
ant control products

Wilco

P.O. Box 80664
Seattle, WA 98108
(206) 762-2120
traps and baits

to get the job done correctly—especially if you don't quite know what you are doing. "It's like playing cards; you don't know until it's over whether you've won or not."

When stalking gophers or moles for clients, "I've caught them in a couple of hours and then I've taken a month to catch them," notes Williams. "And when I first did it, I wasn't successful at all. I had a problem with coyotes stealing my traps."

Trapping fees depend on what the market will bear. Some trappers will get a \$25 service fee just for setting foot on the lawn, plus \$50 for each catch.

"To people who pay \$10,000 for landscaping, it's worth it," says Williams, who adds that he receives much less payment for his services in rural Oregon. ("There

are a lot of retired people here and I get a lot of fresh vegetables and things.")

Upscale, semi-rural neighborhoods are the best hunting grounds for trappers seeking additional clients, Williams advises. "They go to wealthy areas and the people there don't have the time to catch them—so they'll gladly pay 50 bucks apiece for you to catch them."

Be certain of your marketing region. Williams says that word-of-mouth advertising, plus a business card tacked up on a local store bulletin board, brought him a good amount of calls—yet the area was too widespread to make good business sense. "I didn't want to drive 20 miles to check my traps," he concludes.