

Goose Control

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It's that time of year again when the geese begin nesting, attacking golfers and leaving areas of the course marked with their special deposits. I have contacted a number of superintendents to see what they are doing to control their geese, what is working and what isn't.

At Oak Brook Hills, we have done the wires across ponds and found them to be a good deterrent to keeping the geese off the ponds. A few left; most stayed and spent their time and energy messing up the turf areas. We then tried some of the goose repellent (Rejex-It) and found that had virtually no effect (plus it was very expensive).

Our latest approach is the popular border collie. We purchased two-year-old Jenna from the Seclusival Farm and Kennel in Shipman, Virginia. This is where Bob Maibush, Hinsdale C.C., and Ron McCarthy, Edgewood Valley C.C., acquired their border collies. After two weeks, I am as encouraged as I have been with any control method. Jenna is adapting to chasing the geese; about half of our goose population left immediately, and the geese that are left complain to me about her whenever I see them on the course. We did have to take the wires off the ponds since that is now where the geese go to get away from Jenna, and she loves to jump in the pond and swim after them. Unfortunately, the first day, she got tangled in a wire, and we had to pull her out of the pond. She was fine, although I was ready to do mouth-to-snoot resuscitation, if necessary. Jenna is popular with management, although our golfers haven't been quite as quick to accept her.

Jenna cost us \$3,330 complete with delivery to O'Hare in her own pet carrier. She is obedience trained to swim after the geese and has herding training with sheep. It took a couple of weeks to get her to understand the geese were sheep. She is smart, a quick learner and anxious to please (sounds like the ideal assistant doesn't it?). We spent an additional \$1,000 on an indoor/outdoor cage run combination and found she would rather spend her time in my office. She is housebroken (unlike some assistants), so there have been no problems to date. It takes a lot of extra effort to get her onto the course as often as I would like; but all in all, this looks like it could be the best solution. Some other ideas and experiences:

Ron McCarthy, Edgewood Valley C.C., has had his border collie for a year and says he has gotten rid of nearly every goose on the property. He says the dog is a great public relations tool with the members and well worth the time and expense.

Bob Maibush, Hinsdale C.C., got his border collie over the winter and has not had much of a chance to work him. Bob's results to date are minimal, but he is positive about the possible benefits.

Brian Bossert, Bryn Mawr C.C., has had his border collie for a year; and after a pesky period at the beginning when he herded the

golfers and took balls off greens, his dog is doing a great job. You know how they say pets begin to look and act like their owners over time? When I was at Bryn Mawr prior to purchasing a dog and went to see Brian's setup, I offered his dog a steak. He turned it down, and asked for a veggie burger.

Mike Vercautren, Butterfield C.C., has used the shell crackers to upset the geese, and no doubt some golfers. He thought that was working sufficiently well but is now getting pressure from the members to keep up with the Jones and is looking into a border collie.

There are also other superintendents with other varieties of dogs. German Shepherds, Dobermans, etc., all seem to do the job as long as they will chase and generally agitate the geese, just like they do us.

In summary, there is no one answer. Everything works at a certain level, and it seems that you need to do whatever meets the needs of your facility. Shake eggs, spray Rejex-It, wire off your ponds, shoot shell crackers, have long grass around your ponds or get a dog to chase them. Do one; do all of them. If Jenna doesn't work, I'm going to use plastic explosives disguised in putty to look like geese. That will fool those pesky varmints. ■