

Ask the Expert
BY BALAKISHNA RAO



Quinipiac College sits adjacent to Sleeping Giant Mountain near Hamden, CT. This attractive, landscaped campus is home to nearly 6,000 students interested in business, health sciences and liberal arts.

The beautiful setting is also home to about 100 geese who strip lawns and leave mounds of unsightly droppings, according to Timothy Lynch, manager of Heritage Lawns Inc. in Plainville, CT.

Not an unusual problem

What Heritage and other lawn care companies around the country are dealing with is the burgeoning numbers of Canada geese. They feed on school athletic fields, corporate commons, golf course greens and fairways, parks and recreational areas — any attractive food source with ponds and waterways.

Solving the problem was particularly important to school officials, since the geese selected “high profile” areas of the college for their meals and roosting: a field area near the main entrance of the school, a half-acre pond surrounding a heavy traffic quad area and the athletic fields.

Heritage Lawns, founded 12 years ago, provides lawn, tree and shrub care in Connecticut and, more recently, in western Massachusetts. The company, with eight

full-time employees, specializes in the commercial market, servicing schools, industrial parks, condo complexes and businesses. Most of its programs are based on integrated pest management (IPM) methods, according to Jim Leszuk, president.

Going after those ghastly geese

Once geese find a home, it's hard to discourage them. Persistence and a new repellent might be the answer

The challenge

Heritage faced the challenge of herding the feathered pests away from Quinnipiac's commons areas and athletic fields, keeping the site free of bacteria-laden droppings, mess and costly turf repairs. “Geese can take a lawn and thin it to dirt,” says Lynch. “And unless you replace or renovate the lawn, you



are going to have weeds and crabgrass that make the area unsightly."

After trying one spray product that did not deter the geese, Lynch tried a new product developed by Environmental Biocontrol International, a division of DCV, Inc. in Wilmington, DE. The product, called Flight-Control, is a naturally occurring compound that is not harmful to animals, vegetation, humans or geese when used according to the label. The goose repellent mixes with water and is applied with standard spray equipment. In Lynch's case, the equipment was a John Deere Gator with an 80-gal. tank and a boom capable of treating a 12-ft. swath of turf. He added a spreader sticker to the tank mix to help the product adhere to the grass.

Reduced maintenance

Lynch treated about 14 acres at Quinnipiac last December, including the field near the entrance and the quad and athletic fields. He used the recommended gallon to one gallon per acre, depending on bird activity. "The geese left the treated areas almost as soon as the product dried on the grass," says Lynch.

Savings in maintenance of the quad alone make a difference to the school, eliminating the need for employees to clean goose droppings from sidewalks and grassy areas with leaf blowers three times a day. The college also saves on potential costs of renovating goose-damaged turf areas by preventing the problem in the first place, says Lynch. "If Heritage had to renovate the turf in the quad area, for example, the cost would range from \$860 an acre to \$1,100 an acre and would require our attention twice a year," he adds.

Conditioning system

Heritage achieved similar results at a corporate park managed by Griffen Land Resources in Windsor, CT. The office park is just under 10 acres, has waterways, and is adjacent to corn and tobacco fields, which

are attractive to Canada geese because they like to eat residual stalks. Lynch says the application of the new repellent drove the geese to the far side of the pond. Heritage will continue treating the turf until the geese are conditioned to stay out.

A battle in the "Show me" state

In Missouri, a large national car leasing company has been battling geese on its office grounds in a suburb of St. Louis.

About 20 Canada geese moved in to feed

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and roost on land at the company's headquarters in a 6-acre park with a manmade lake and stream. For months, the geese chowed down on the grass, left feces all over sidewalks and became aggressive with company employees.

Top Care Inc., a full-service landscape and lawn care company serving commercial and residential customers in Missouri, Illinois and Kansas, came to the rescue with the same product used at Quinnipiac. The firm applied the repellent last summer. After the first application, birds began to leave for other feeding areas almost immediately, returning only to roost and loaf. Some birds settled on the south side of the bottom lake. After the second application, all the geese moved to parking islands. One day after the second application, all geese



Grass treated with the product under normal light.

left the property to feed in other areas.

"The customer decided the product worked, so we made a third application," says Top Care operations manager Mike King. "Days after the last application, there were no birds on the property or in the general area.

"More importantly, we helped the company reduce the cost of clean up and im-



Same grass under ultraviolet light as the geese see it.

prove the aesthetics of the property. Now, employees can enjoy the patio area for lunch. Meanwhile, we've generated a new revenue stream by helping it and other clients deal with the birds in a humane way," King notes.

For more information, contact EBI at 800/468-6324 or the Web site: www.flightcontrol.com

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