

Practices

Quiet Alternatives

Most Whatcom County blueberry fields are located near other rural residents. Audible devices impact an area larger than a blueberry field, so be aware of how the noise affects your neighbors. Deploying scare devices that cause minimal off-site impacts, should be used as a first-resort. You may not need to use other loud devices.

What Often Works

Starlings are effectively deterred by: artificial raptors like Peregrine Falcon and Bald Eagle JacKites; balloon kites like the Vigilante Helikites. Interchanging and alternate use of these devices is advised. Live raptors like Kestrel Falcons nesting nearby; live raptors like Red-tail hawks, Bald Eagles; and even Turkey Vultures flying overhead are also helpful.

Other Considerations

- Robins and other song birds are very resistant to loud noise devices and visual scare devices. Use of taste aversion agents like Migrate for Agriculture are often the only effective repellent technique for robins.
- Audible bird distress or predator mimic devices have mixed results. However if used in conjunction with artificial raptors, the two devices may be effective.
- Operating any loud audible device on a regular, repeated or otherwise automatic basis will quickly cause starling habituation, making the device almost useless.

Cooperate

Work with your dairy and non-agricultural neighbors in funding the USDA starling trapping program. For every starling removed by trapping, another 6 potential offspring will be eliminated.

Contact: Farm Friends at 354-1337

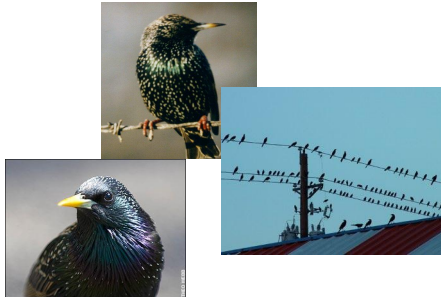


Bird Management

Best Practice Recommendations for Blueberry Growers

(360) 318-1851

Bird Management Strategies



All farmers face numerous challenges with getting their crop to market and realizing a fair return on their investment.

Likewise, blueberry growers confront disease, weather and predation by birds.

The European Starling is often the major problem bird as it removes or damages the berry fruit.

Combating bird predation, blueberry growers often use a number of ways to repel birds from their fields. Some of these techniques have proven effectiveness. Others have not. Some have a low impact on the natural and human environment. Others are more invasive.

This Bird Management brochure describes for the blueberry grower, a summary on current best practices that reduce bird predation while being a good neighbor.

Principles



MONITOR

Nothing is more important than regular field monitoring of actual conditions: bird species, numbers, level of predation, field entry & exit pathways, roosting conditions. Ask...“What is pressuring my field at this time?” “Are there signs of impending pressure?”

ASSESS

Your observations will help you verify the level of pressure by birds, what species are present, flight pathways, and other factors.

DECIDE

With this information you will be able to determine what scare tactics you should use that respond to actual conditions.

DIVERSIFY

There is no single “silver bullet” that by itself and continuously used, will be effective. Repeated, uninterrupted use of any scare tactic will result in the birds getting used to the tactic or device. Use of different tactics and devices is required.

CHANGE

Even using many different scare devices is not enough. The grower needs to alter the location and arrangement of these devices on a consistent basis. Putting up and taking down the devices, will also confuse and cause fright in birds.

CONFIRM

During the day, re-monitor conditions to determine how well your bird repellent tactics are working. Make alterations as needed to respond to changes in bird pressure or the lack of it.

CREATIVE

Explore new or unusual ways to scare starlings, i.e., flying stunt kites near or over the field; attract Turkey vultures to fly near or over the field; mix up and change all of your tactics and devices to constantly confuse the bird population.

Bottom Line:

To outsmart starlings, blueberry growers will be aided by:

- Providing onsite monitoring.
- Minimizing practices that encourage habituation conditions (starlings get accustomed to and are not frightened) because of repeated and regular use of scare devices.
- Catching the birds off-guard by constant alteration of scare tactics and devices, changing what is used and their field location.
- Using natural or artificial raptors.



Peregrine Falcon JackKite in flight

Scare Device Sources:

- *JackKites* (Falcons, Eagles, poles):
360 319-4772 Jeff Littlejohn-local dealer
- *Migrate for Agriculture*:
360 757-6053 Gus Hoover-Skagit Farmers
- *Helikites* and accessories:
800 441-2847 Bionet Inc.

Local Consultants:

- For birds of prey: Karen Steensma,
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- For JackKites/Helikites: Jeff Littlejohn
318-1851 jeffnwmm@earthlink.net