

## **Suggestions for Achieving Better Solutions than Propane Cannons in U.S. Locales**

### Us

Creative Scarecrows started in Whatcom County to find win-win solutions for farmers and residents. We entirely support our farmers. Farmers need to have profitable crops. We, as residents, want to restore the summer character of rural living by first reducing, then ending, the use of propane cannons and other loud auditory devices (LADs) to scare birds out of blueberry fields (also in cherry orchards). There are many ways to protect crops without noise.

### The problem

For those not in rural areas, imagine gardening, or relaxing on your back porch. Add in a big-fireworks-loud “boom” “boom” “boom” going on for hours—dawn to dusk, day after day. It doesn't take very long for a “boom-boom-boom” conditioned reflex “flinch” to begin, and when the cannons stop, the flinch continues for a while, anticipating the next “boom”. Did you want a relaxing enjoyable summer on your own property? Too bad. We believe summer is a time to sleep with open windows, not cringe in a closed room with pillows over your head.

The entire agricultural berry industry "knows" that cannons and other loud auditory devices (LADs) are very loud and very disruptive bird-scarer tactics. That fact is globally acknowledged by numerous international “guidelines” for their use.

Farmers are generally protected by “right to farm” laws and the fireworks-like-booms of these cannons have become a regular farming practice. The cannons often run dawn to dusk for weeks at a time--even all night, when no berry-eating birds are active! You can document how far they can be heard with Google Earth. We have been woken up at night by cannons 4 miles away.

### Our action suggestions

We believe cannons are not needed for crop protection. To reduce and hopefully end their use, this fact must be proven and established. To begin this change in your area will take effort. Change doesn't happen by sitting on the couch complaining. In our case, we are motivated by the torture of living near these noise devices. Here's a nutshell of three basic efforts.

- a public campaign to educate farmers of noiseless alternatives (there are many),
- public pressure for satisfactory research and proof of alternatives, and
- local legal laws for LAD regulation. Our first, interim guidelines are at the end of these pages.

See our website for some of our activities: <http://www.banthe cannons.com/creative-scarecrows.html>

Here's some specific suggestions for action.

1. Letters to the editor promoting win-win solutions to the problem. Include your email so other residents can contact you.
2. Do one or more public awareness/service meetings/events to bring information about alternative solutions to farmers, residents, and elected representatives. Feature local and state experts in related fields. See our free booklet for ideas. It's available on our website.
3. Seek bridges to the agricultural community to expand awareness of these alternatives. Positive

solutions for this powder-keg issue are welcomed by alert people in this industry. Find, encourage, and support farmers willing to try alternative measures. Many, many farmers will welcome effective noiseless bird-scaring solutions.

4. Build relationships with your local and state political/governing representatives and make them aware of the benefits of finding and promoting noiseless solutions. Letters, calls, petitions.

This cannon practice will only become obsolete through efforts from concerned citizens.

Here are some guideline considerations:

1. non-invasive (sight, sprays, etc.) repellent methods must be first choices
2. monitored and used only during when birds are present
3. minimum acreage requirements for use of auditory devices
4. minimum distance from neighboring homes and businesses, providing some sort of a sound buffer zone
5. hours of operation (dawn to dusk, 8am-6pm, mid-day break, not on Sunday)
6. banned entirely in residential zoning classifications

#### Legal route -- in Washington state

If you live in Washington state, and if your possession of the property predates the usage of cannons by the neighbor, you might have a legal case based on the Yakima court appeal about a neighbor who sued a nearby orchard for using cannons and won -- the neighbors had been enjoying their property for a long time before the cannons started

[http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=wa&vol=2006\\_app/240410MAJ&invol=4](http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=wa&vol=2006_app/240410MAJ&invol=4)

#### Last word of advice

We began public dialog by holding public meetings to begin publicizing and researching alternative noiseless solutions for protecting crops. That led to a county committee, and interim guidelines this year in our very responsive and forward-looking county.

In this entire process it is important to remember the win-win solution, and to avoid confrontation (which sets up "battle lines"). Farmers can misinterpret your desire for silent bird deterrents as an attempt to harm their business. For agitated residents, the stress caused by suffering from cannons can lead to all sorts of "midnight thoughts". In your efforts, keep your intentions clear and maintain your open intent to find win-win solutions for farmers to have profitable crops and residents to live a rural lifestyle that is not ruined by cannon use. Promote these solutions and their benefits to farmers and residents and create a joint effort by both parties to find a harmonious and satisfactory resolution.

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<http://www.wcfarmfriends.com/go/doc/1579/203759/>

Good Management Practices - June 1, 2008

Interim Guidelines for the Use of Propane Cannons & Other Bird Scare Auditory Devices

FINAL DRAFT

Good Management Practices - Interim Guidelines for the Use of Propane Air Cannons  
and Other Bird Scare Auditory Devices

Dated June 1, 2008, Whatcom County, WA

The following Interim Guidelines, effective June 1, 2008 through December, 31, 2008, currently define "Good Management Practices" protected under the Whatcom County Right to Farm Ordinance (Chapter 14.02 WCC). These "Guidelines" are an effort to establish an acceptable program between all parties affected by current agricultural operations with regard to the use of propane air cannons and other loud auditory bird scare devices further referred to as LAD's. These guidelines apply when there are residences or businesses within a quarter mile of the crop field.

The purpose of these guidelines is to help small fruit growers deploy effective crop protection tactics and equipment by reducing bird predation while providing neighboring homes and businesses with reasonable levels of peace and quiet.

It is recommended that on a regular basis, growers, nearby residents, or businesses, establish lines of communication and continue to correspond with each other in an attempt to remain aware of the grower's plans to implement crop protection strategies.

#### Guidelines

No-noise or low-noise bird deterrents are preferred and thus recommended "first resort" practices. These include devices such as JacKites, Helikites, falconry services, trapping, kestrel boxes, netting, and other visual and sensory deterrents.

LAD's should not be used when birds are not present and threatening predation of fruit. Careful consideration of controlling pests without becoming one should be taken into account with the use of any type of auditory control measures.

Birds quickly become habituated to LADs when they are used incorrectly. To be most effective, LADs should be used in conjunction with a wide range of scaring tactics and regularly altered by:

Changing positioning or direction of LAD

Altering times, pitch, or magnitude of sound

Regular monitoring of bird activity to ensure effectiveness of LADs

Including some threat of physical harm to birds to accompany LAD

LAD's are to be used only during daylight hours corresponding with avian feed cycles.

LAD's are to be used on the lowest practical decibel setting.

When possible, LADs should be positioned with the cannon barrel, or speaker box pointed away from residences or businesses.

When possible, use of hay bales or other sound buffering devices are recommended in order to mitigate noise impacts to residences or businesses.

If intervals between firing are too short, birds will quickly become used to the scarer. LADs should be fired a minimum number of times per hour (suggested no more than a maximum of once every 15 minutes if a single blast cannon; once every 20 minutes if the source is a multi-blast cannon).

More information on bird deterrent tactics can be found in the WSU/Whatcom County Extension Integrated Pest Management for Blueberries Manual. The WSU Extension Office can be reached at 676-6736. A copy of the guidelines is available at:

<http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ag/comhort/nooksack/ipmweb/blue/index.html> .

To make a report about non-adherence to these guidelines please call the Whatcom County Sheriff at

360-676-6650. These reports will be used to help identify problems and reviewed to help find better solutions for our farmers and our community.