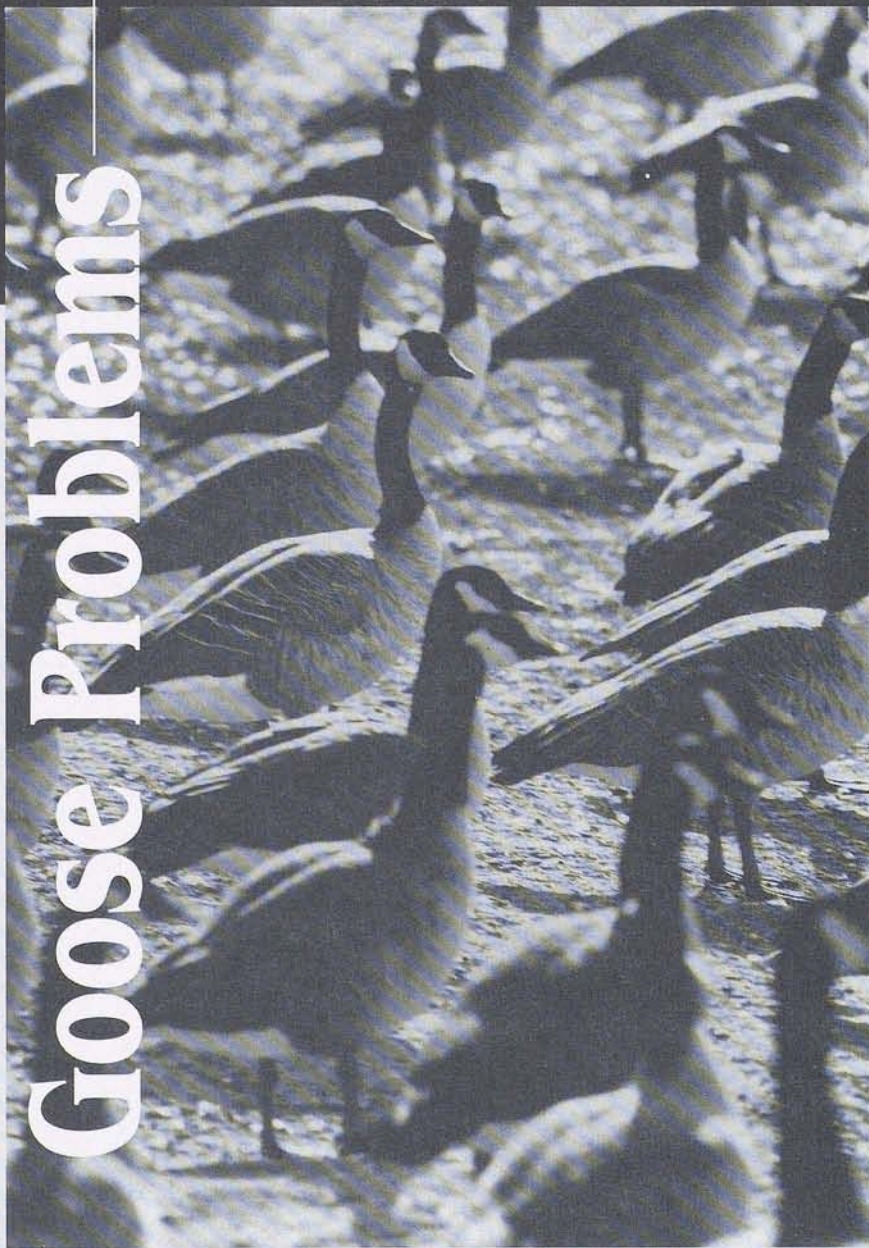


Homeowners' Guide to

Goose Problems



HOMEOWNERS' GUIDE TO GOOSE PROBLEMS

Most people enjoy seeing Canada geese. However, the big birds often wear out their welcome when they become too numerous and when yards, beaches and docks become fouled with their feces. This guide explains why problems with geese arise and how homeowners can reduce these problems.

WHY ARE THERE SO MANY GEESE?

Canada goose populations have dramatically increased in residential and lake home areas because: 1) habitat is abundant; 2) geese have a high reproductive potential and a long life span; and 3) mortality from hunting and other predation is low.

Geese live in a particular area that meets their needs for food, reproduction and security. Together these factors provide goose *habitat*. Geese are grazers that feed primarily on short grasses such as those found in parks, lawns and golf courses. They need feeding sites with open vistas and access to lakes and marshes to escape danger. Golf courses, parks and large lawns next to ponds, marshes and lakes often provide all of these ingredients. Docks, yards and beaches provide secure "loafing" sites for preening and sunning.

Canada geese are extremely prolific. Able to reproduce at 2 or 3 years of age and living to over 10 years, a pair of adult geese raises an average of about 4 young per year. At normal reproduction and mortality, a pond or lake with 3 pairs of adult geese can multiply to nearly 50 birds within 5 years and to over 300 in just 10 years. Being social birds geese congregate in "flocks," except during the nesting season. Most birds in these flocks are related and return to the same nesting and feeding areas every year. Currently, about 25,000 geese spend the summer in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. Without hunting seasons and efforts to trap and remove geese, the goose population would likely number 100,000 or more. Without these constraints on the population, the habitat in the seven-county metro area could support an estimated 250,000 geese.

HOW CAN I GET THE GEESE TO LEAVE?

Hazing

The simplest method involves frightening or *hazing* geese. In some cases, repeatedly and vigorously chasing geese from the property while armed with a broom will cause the geese to relocate.

Noise-making scare devices are a type of pyrotechnics and can sometimes be used to haze geese from your property. Pyrotechnics are most applicable in rural settings. These include "bangers" and "screamers" fired from a special launcher or "cracker shells" discharged from a 12-gauge shotgun. These devices are often offensive to neighbors. Check local ordinances before purchasing or using pyrotechnic devices. Use pyrotechnics consistent with manufacturers instructions and safety precautions. These products are available from:

Margo Supplies, Ltd. 403-285-9731	Reed-Joseph International 800-647-5554
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Stoneco, Inc. 800-833-2264	Sutton Ag Enterprises, Inc. 408-422-9693
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Some golf courses have had success hazing geese using highly trained border collies with skilled handlers to repeatedly chase geese from fairways and greens, forcing the birds to relocate. At homes, confined or chained dogs are not effective deterrents since geese quickly learn that the threat is limited. Free running dogs are not popular with neighbors and not allowed in most residential communities. However, dogs confined to the problem area by an electronic "invisible fence" may be useful in some situations. Careful selection and training of a dog motivated to chase geese is necessary to ensure success. "Invisible" dog fences are available from:

Invisible Fencing Pet Containment
800-824-3647

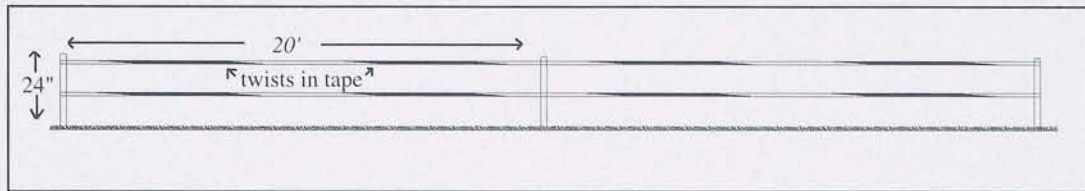


Figure 1- Bird Scare Tape fence installed using lath boards for support. Secure bird scare tape to stakes using duct tape or electrician's tape (do not tie bird scare tape).

Bird Scare Tape

Bird scare tape or bird flash tape is a short-term or emergency strategy to reduce problems from geese walking onto your yard. Bird scare tape is most effective with small numbers of geese that have other mowed grass areas they can move to. Bird scare tape is not effective if geese are flying into your yard.

Bird scare tape is a thin shiny ribbon of mylar about 1/2 inch wide. It is silver on one side and colored, usually red, on the other. When properly used, the tape flashes in the sun and rattles in the breeze. The flashing and rattling frightens geese.

Use bird scare tape as illustrated in figures 1 & 2. Inspect and repair the tape daily. Pets, people, wind, and animals can break the tape. A broken bird scare tape "fence" is not effective. Locate the tape where it is visible to the geese. The fence should be long enough so geese cannot walk around it into the yard.

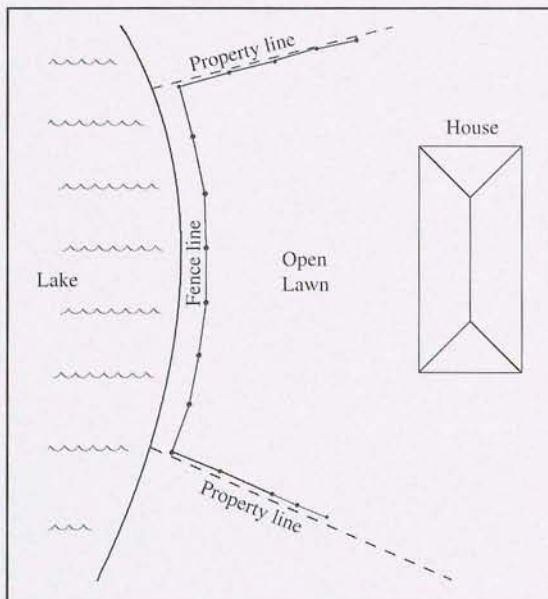


Figure 2- Suggested layout for bird scare tape, energized fencing or barrier fencing. It may be necessary to extend fence line along property line as shown to prevent geese from walking around the fence.

Bird scare tape is available from:

Twin Cities

Lyndale Garden Ctrs.
Wild Bird Stores
(See Yellow Pages)

Beiswenger's Hardware
612-633-1271

The Birdhouse
612-439-1923

The Feed Store
612-473-4283

Hennepin Coop
Seed Exchange
612-545-7702

Minnesota Greenery
612-459-3181

Robbinsdale Farm,
Garden and Pet
612-533-2244

Mail Order

MDT and Assoc.
612-529-4355

Gurney's Seed Co.
605-665-1930

Outstate

Celebrations,
Brainerd*
218-828-0803

Randall Valu Ctr.,
New Ulm
507-359-9514

Coast to Coast,
Park Rapids
218-732-4513

* Ask for silver and colored ribbon

Energized Fencing

Energized fencing can effectively and practically reduce goose grazing on your yard. It is useful in situations more severe than hazing or bird scare tape can handle. Most home owners prefer portable fencing that can be set up in 1-2 hours and quickly taken down for storage when not in use.

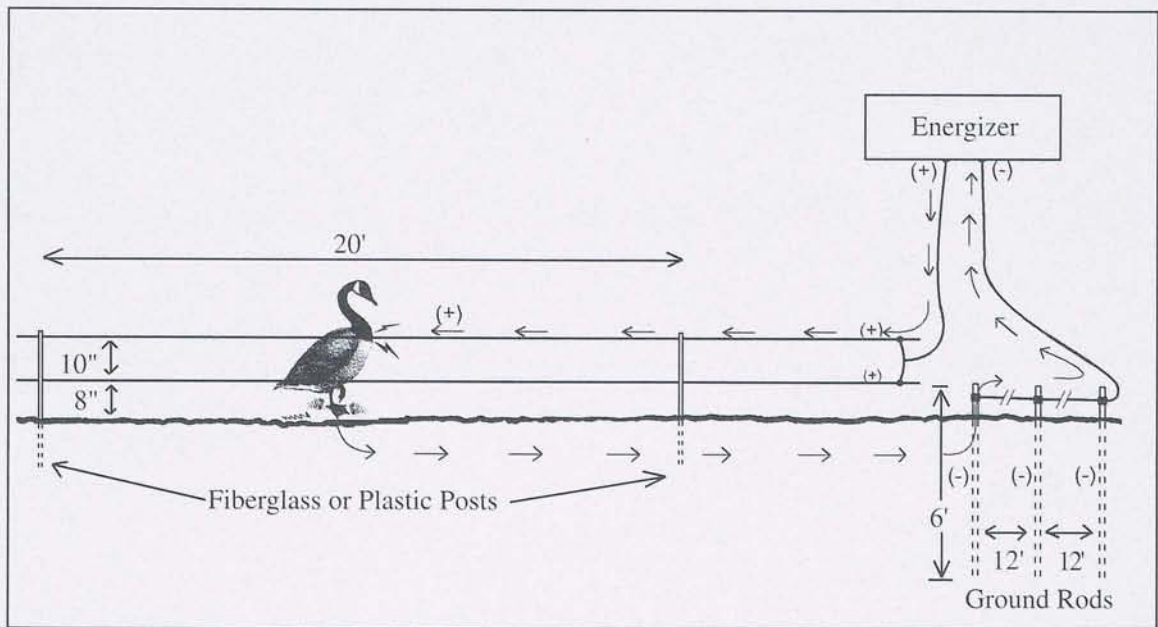


Figure 3- A two strand energized goose fence is easy to install, safe and effective at deterring geese from entering your yard.

Key components of an energized fence for geese:

(1) Energizer - The energizer is the power source for the fence. Energizers can be battery powered or 120 volt. Low impedance energizers which deliver a short electrical pulse of at least 4,000 volts once every second are safe and effective.

(2) Fence wires - Most home owners prefer the ease of using polytape. Polytape is a 1/2-inch-wide material consisting of polyethylene fibers inter-woven with conductive wires (preferably 5 or more strands of stainless steel) to carry the electrical charge. Stretch two strands 8 inches and 18 inches above the ground (see figure 3). Tighten wire to remove visible sag. Connect fence wires to the fence terminal on the energizer.

(3) Grounding system - The grounding system is a series of three 6-foot galvanized steel rods driven into the earth at 12-foot intervals. Connect the rods in sequence using steel wire and connect the series to the ground terminal on the energizer.

(4) Voltmeter - A voltmeter is a device used to measure voltage on an energized fence. A voltmeter is essential to ensure that the system is working properly and to pinpoint problems when they occur.

When a goose touches an energized fence, the electric pulse passes from the energizer through the fence wire, through the goose, into the earth, to the grounding

system, and back to the energizer (see figure 3). The result is an uncomfortable, but harmless, "shock" that geese learn to avoid.

Energized fencing must be properly constructed and maintained to be effective. Make the fence long enough so geese won't walk around it (see figure 2). Measure voltage weekly and keep fence wires clear of vegetation. Install energized-fence warning signs at least every 60 feet. Energized fencing is prohibited in some cities. If you are interested in using energized fencing for geese, check local ordinances and contact your DNR Area Wildlife Office for more information.

Barrier Fencing

Barrier fencing is a very effective method for excluding walking geese from your yard. This method consists of placing a physical barrier that geese cannot pass through between the water and the area to be protected (see figure 2).

Barrier fences can be constructed from woven wire, chicken wire, plastic snow fence, corn cribbing, chain-link, netting, or a picket fence. An effective barrier fence for walking Canada geese uses durable material with openings no larger than 3 inches by 3 inches that is at least 30 inches high. Before you build any fence, check local ordinances at your planning and zoning office.

Landscaping

Landscaping your shoreline to make it less attractive for Canada geese and their broods is considered the most effective long-term and environmentally sound method of reducing goose problems to individual yards and lawns. Canada geese avoid using areas where plants obstruct their view of the surrounding area. Temporary measures such as fences or repellents may be necessary to keep geese from your yard until landscaping is established.

A hedge near the water with a gate to allow access can be decorative as well as effective at reducing goose access to your lawn (see figure 4). The hedge should be 30-36 inches tall and must be thick enough to exclude geese. Check with your local nursery or greenhouse for shrubs that will work in your yard.

Leave a dense strip of naturally occurring trees and shrubs (20-30 feet wide) along the shoreline. A narrow (3-4 feet wide) S-shaped footpath can provide access to the lake. A continuous band of emergent aquatic plants such as cattails or bulrush in the water in front of your shoreline may reduce goose use of your yard (see figure 5).

An unmowed shoreline buffer of native grasses and wild flowers that grow 20-30 inches tall in a strip 20-30 feet wide along the shoreline can discourage goose visits. Native grasses generally remain standing even after winter snows have compacted most other grasses. Use a mowed S-shaped footpath (3-4 feet wide) to provide access from your yard to the shoreline.

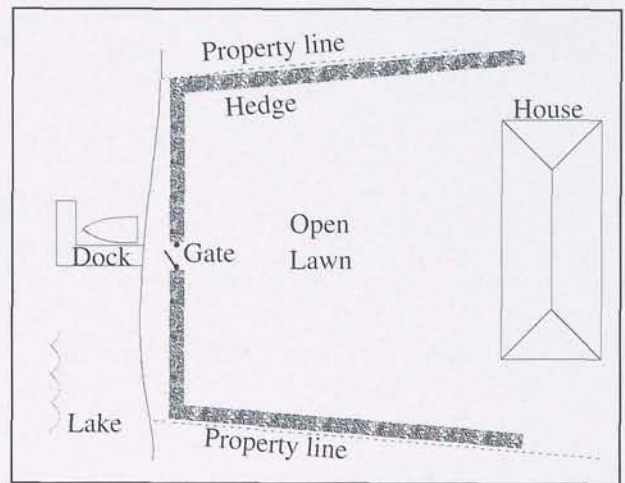


Figure 4- Use a dense hedge and a gate as a barrier to keep geese off of your lawn.

A combination of landscaping ideas may be more applicable to your yard. Suggestions for perennial plantings along moist shorelines are available from the DNR publication "Landscaping for Wildlife" available at major bookstores or the Minnesota Bookstore (800-657-3757), or the Hennepin Conservation District's booklet "Aquascaping: A Guide to Shoreline Landscaping" available by sending \$4.44 to Hennepin Conservation District, 10801 Wayzata Blvd. #240, Minnetonka, MN 55305.

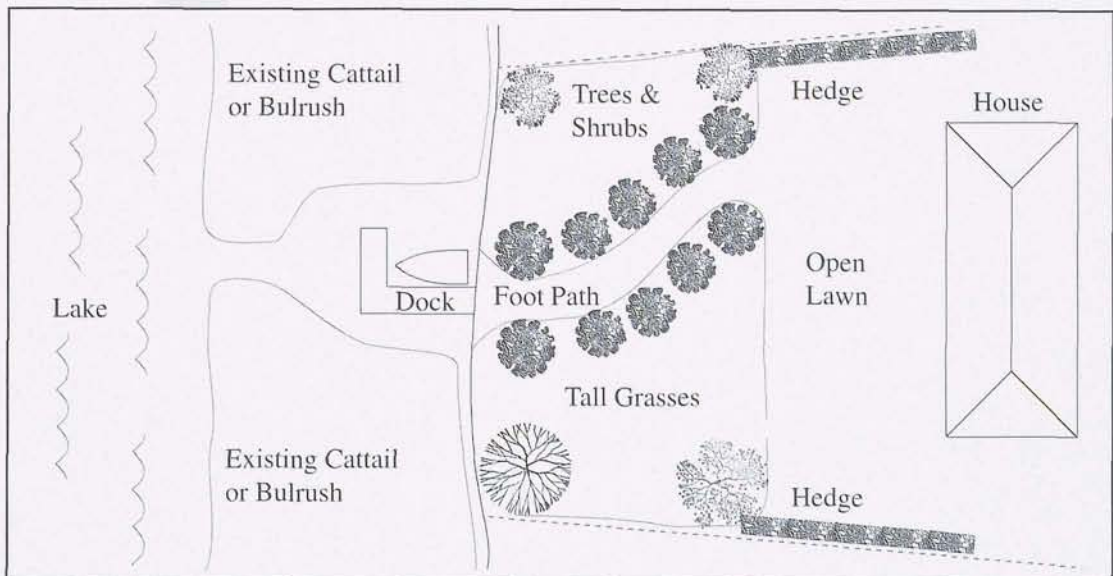


Figure 5- Examples of using landscaping to reduce the attractiveness of your lawn to geese.

The main drawback of avoidance methods discussed in this brochure is that they merely cause geese to move to another property. Increasing goose populations will eventually create a larger "demand" for habitat. This demand, often called "pressure," causes geese to become increasingly resistant to avoidance techniques.

Hunting is the most effective way to control goose populations. Special hunting seasons that target local geese have been established by the DNR. Early seasons are limited to field or upland hunting to prevent conflicts with other recreational uses of lakes. However, at the request of local government, individual lakes and wetlands may be opened.

Controlled hunting can be successful in populated areas. Local governments are encouraged to keep goose hunting open where possible. Citizens concerned with growing goose populations are encouraged to support local government efforts to limit restrictions on hunting where possible. The DNR will provide technical assistance in starting and managing hunts. For more information, contact your local DNR Area Wildlife Office.

Listings of company names and products is for the readers convenience and is not considered a comprehensive listing. The state of Minnesota neither recommends nor endorses specific products or companies.

For more information, contact:

Department of Natural Resources, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN
55155-4040
296-6157 (Metro Area) 1-800-766-6000 (MN Toll Free)
Telecommunication Device for the Deaf
296-5484 (Metro Area) 1-800-657-3929 (MN Toll Free)

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