

Good Management Practices for the use of Propane Air
Cannons and other Bird Scare Auditory Devices
Whatcom County, WA

The following management practices currently define good management practices for bird management in small fruit fields in Whatcom County. 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.

Please keep in mind LADs can be very disrupting to residents nearby berry fields and that utilizing these devices should be used once other measures do not work.

Guidelines

1. No-noise or low-noise bird deterrents are preferred and thus recommended "first resort" practices. These include devices such as exclusion structures, Jackites, Helikites, falconry services, chemical repellents, trapping, netting, and other visual and sensory deterrents. More information on these practices can be found here: <http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ipm/manual/blue/birds.html>.
2. 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.
3. 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:
 - a. Changing positioning or direction of LAD
 - b. Altering times, pitch, or magnitude of sound
 - c. Regular monitoring of bird activity to ensure effectiveness of LADs
 - d. Including some threat of physical harm to birds to accompany LADs
4. LAD's are to be used only during daylight hours that correspond with avian feed cycles. Birds typically feed in the morning and late in the afternoon.

5. LAD's are to be used on the lowest practical decibel setting.
6. When possible, LADs should be positioned with the cannon barrel, or speaker box pointed away from residences or businesses.
7. When possible, use of hay bales or other sound buffering devices are recommended in order to mitigate noise impacts to residences or businesses.
8. If intervals between firing are too short, birds will quickly become immune to the sound, thus eliminating the effectiveness of these devices. LADs should be fired a minimum number of times per hour (suggested frequency is once every 20 minutes if a single blast cannon; once every 25 minutes if the source is a multi-blast cannon).

More information on bird deterrent tactics can be found in the Washington State University Whatcom County Extension [Integrated Pest Management for Blueberries Manual](#). The WSU Extension Office can be reached at 360-778-5809. A copy of the guidelines is available at: <http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ipm/manual/blue/index.html>

To make a report about non-adherence to these guidelines please call the Whatcom County Sheriff at 360-778-6600. These reports will be used to help identify problems and reviewed to help find better solutions for our farmers and our community.