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USE OF PERCHES AT REFINERY SITES

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I was listed to speak about bird control on industrial sites, so I have selected three or four of the more interesting jobs that we have worked on over the past ten years. Naturally the ones that the pest control firms call us about are those that they have tackled from several different angles and been unable to solve. As a result of this, we have had several really interesting bird control jobs in conjunction with pest control firms. I think each one of them will point out different problems and ways to solve them.

I look at bird control as a six-part program. First, is safety. Several items of safety have already been mentioned, but one additional one that is very important is wearing masks when you are working around bird roosts and bird droppings, and cleaning up after you get through. According to various reports, 30-35 different diseases are carried by pigeons and their droppings. One that was not mentioned that is very prominent is histoplasmosis. It can become an expensive problem if an employee gets a fungus infection. I think it should be absolutely required that when employees are working in and around bird roosts and bird nesting places that they wear masks.

Of course knowledge is important, knowledge of the habits of the bird. Observation of the birds involved will save you a lot of time and problems later. I will elaborate on this in the specific examples.

Then of course you control the birds, and after you control them, you clean up. You clean up their nests; you clean up their droppings, and you spray the nests to take care of the ectoparasites, or they will become a real problem.

And then of course, it is all for naught unless you make money, and John Beck is going to tell you how to make money later.

The first of the jobs is a large trailer manufacturing company in Indiana, and it involves sparrows. The building covered about 20 acres. There was a railroad along one side, and the other whole side was a truck dock. Looking at a vertical view of this, you have the dock here and an overhang here, trusses in here, and a continuous bunch of doors -- large doors that more or less were open most of the time. And this was all wood; there was no steel, no tie-rods.

I might explain sparrow perches. Indoors a plain one is used; and for outdoor work there is a perch with a 300-mesh wire screen over it. Through many tests, this diameter was found to be the one most preferred by sparrows and starlings. Where there are no steel tie-rods of one-quarter to five-eighths-inch diameter, birds much prefer to land on these perches.

* deceased

At this company the pest control firm kept installing additional perches at right angles to the line of flight as the birds came into the building. The PCO had the perches well located -- right in the line of flight; the birds like to hit some type of perch before they move on into the building. Quite often after they get inside, where the light is reduced, they like to land again before they go up to the nests or to the roof.

Although the perches were well located, there were so many openings that he was not making a dent in the flock. The PCO asked me to come down and look at things, so we wandered around the building, in and out. It had a tapered roof and had insulation covered by plastic. The birds had broken into this all over the building and roosted in there. There were about 600-800 sparrows involved in this problem.

The Union had demanded the company get rid of the birds. The Union had gone to the health department, and the health department gave them 60 days to get the problem cleaned up. Besides the deadline, it was very costly. Bird droppings are very corrosive; it is difficult to finish metal after they have fallen on it, so the clean-up problem was expensive.

About 4:20 the superintendent told me the factory closed at 4:30. I asked when they opened again, and he said Monday at 7:00. I had thought part of the problem was because they were open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Keep in mind there was no food or water in that place. It was the type of building where the skylights were all transparent fiberglass, plastic, and the doors were all tight. There were no entries.

We went around to the back to where there was a monorail that came out through a small opening. After the building was closed we observed the birds. They did not seem to be in any hurry to get in or out at 4:30, and they are pretty aware of time. So we discovered that after 4:30 they came and went through this hole along the monorail.

There were a lot of tie-rods and places for them to land. The birds would land on some of the ties and rails and then hop in; and the ones on the inside used the same method to get out. So we used Bird Tanglefoot around the areas where they were landing before going through this hole. Then we put two perches inside and two outside where they would land and then hop through the hole and on into the building.

In 10 days the problem was cleaned up 100% as far as the birds were concerned. But the whole problem was not solved until the nests were dug out of the insulation. Those spots were sprayed to take care of the ectoparasites and the insulation was sealed back up. That is a very important part of any bird job. This example points out that one important thing is observing the job before you start it. Any questions?

Question: You said you sprayed the nest area when you tore down some of the insulation?

Answer: Yes. Clean down the nests and spray the area.

Question: What are you spraying with?

Answer: We use Dursban or Diazinon. It does not always last until all those eggs in there hatch, but it is the best we have for that type of job.

Question: What I do not understand is from the theoretical point of view. They have to be landing in different areas throughout the plant…

Answer: But all weekend they had to go through this one opening, to go out to feed and water, because the plant was closed from Friday at 4:30 until 7:00 Monday morning. This was the key to it. They had one place where they could get in and out.

Question: I understand that. My question is, if that hole was not there…

Answer: They might not have had a bird problem, because they could not get out to feed and water during the weekend.

Question: But still, my question is why weren't they landing on the other perches? Why did these methods fail?

Answer: Because the area was so great and open. Many birds were flying on into the building because the doors were so big and it was pretty light in there, but this is a good point.

Question: Do you spray the nest before you take it down? Or do you take it down and then spray?

Answer: Take it down. What was done here, they cleaned the nests out, put them in plastic bags and sprayed the area where the nests had been.

Question: What about the guy who takes down the nests -- does he get ectoparasites on him?

Answer: They did not report any trouble on this particular work.

Question: It seems to me that there might be an advantage to spraying first.

Answer: That is a really good point, and probably that was done. We recommend spraying that area. Otherwise those ectoparasites could become a problem because after they get hungry, they move to the nearest warm body.

The second job I would like to talk about involved a large steel mill in the east. We were called on for help. The mill was about one-third mile long; it was a huge mill, and they had a pigeon population there of approximately 200-300 birds. There were openings and open skylights all along the roof and huge doors on the side where the rail cars went in.

The pigeons did not flock in any particular area there. There were bays that were approximately 150 feet wide where they were fabricating steel, and the pigeons were scattered along the length of the building on high rails, watching what was going on down below. They entered through the doors and through the skylights, and we could find no place in the vicinity where they were feeding. The nearest grain elevator was over two miles away, and the flock there was many times larger than the one bothering the mill. The mill had fought the problem for a long time and called in a pest control firm, and they had battled it, too.

The solution for this problem was suggested by Bob Bosch. The birds see seemed to come in from the south side of the roof, so he established six

spots along there where they threw handfuls of corn. Then they put the feeder perch up after they had established a feeding pattern. We put six of those along that mill and this cleaned up the problem that they had battled from many different angles and directions.

Question: In New York Entex is banned. How can we use the perch?

Answer: If they banned Entex, they have probably banned Endrin. In Michigan they banned both of them in perches, but then they regranted a restricted "PCO only" use, and they have to be a licensed, registered pest control operation. We had a tough time getting that through the Department of Natural Resources, but it is approved.

J. Beck: Let me try to help you with that -- I'm familiar with the New York situation, Entex is banned, but this material is not classified as Entex. It is Rid-a-Bird fluid number such and such, and it has registration in New York at the time. It has the registration using this particular fluid only in the perch, and that is the only way it has registration. That is available in New York, but it is not really Entex. We probably should not use the words Entex and Endrin, because it is Rid-a-Bird Fluid numbers 111 and 114. That is the way they are registered, and they are registered only for use in the perch facility.

Question: Does it have registration in New York?

Answer: It has federal registration, yes.

Question: Are perches legal where there is food?

Answer: No sir. Not inside a food processing plant or on the premises of the food processing plant.