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Alan T. Mulder  
*Berry College*

Mary Patsimas  
*Berry College*

Suzannah Forbes  
*Berry College*

George R. Gallagher  
*Berry College*, ggallagher@berry.edu

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The Efficacy of Milorganite® as a Repellent for Rabbits

Alan T. Mulder, Mary Patsimas, Suzannah Forbes and George R. Gallagher
Department of Animal Science, Berry College, Mount Berry, Georgia

ABSTRACT: The objective of the study was to evaluate the efficacy of Milorganite® as a repellent to mitigate damage on impatiens (Impatiens walleriana) by domestic New Zealand White rabbits (Oryctolagus cuniculus). This biosolid byproduct of an activated sludge processing technique has been suggested as a repellent for a number of species. Three, 4 m square pens were constructed with steel walls and subterranean wire to prevent escape. Two female and one male (2-3 kg) were housed in each pen and provided with shelter, water and 170 g per animal of a complete pellet ration daily. Three impatiens plants were placed in plastic planters (55 cm x 25 cm x 25 cm) with potting soil. Four planters were placed within a hole at respective corners of each pen, resulting in plants within 2.5 cm of being level with the ground. Two diagonal planters received topdressing of 2500 kg/ha or 0 kg/ha of Milorganite®. Changes in plant area as determined by digital photographs taken on day 0 and day 7 post-treatment were used as an indication of consumption. During the 21-day trial, new plants were treated and evaluated at 7-day interval. While plant areas were similar (P > .10) prior to treatment, area of control plants (17.2 ± 0.8) was lower (P < .05) than Milorganite® treated plants (21.2 ± 1.0). Differences in week (P < .001) were noted as a result of larger impatiens utilized during week 1 compared to remaining weeks. However, there was no treatment by week interaction (P > .10). No differences (P > .10) were observed for treatment plant location, pen or technicians determining plant area. Results of this study indicate Milorganite® was effective in reducing damage to impatiens by domestic rabbits.

Key Words: domestic rabbits, Milorganite®, repellent