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USE OF AIRCRAFT FOR BIRD CONTROL

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Flight Service, Irwin, Ohio

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Things have changed considerably during the past several years in the aerial applicating business as in most other industries. For a long time farmers have been searching for a way to control blackbirds in their corn fields. As long as fifteen years ago a group of farmers in Sandusky County asked us to apply lime to their fields in the hope that this would frighten birds from their fields. In Belle Glade, Florida, several farmers pooled their resources and hired a small cub-type airplane to fly all day long over their sweet corn fields to frighten away black birds. This method was somewhat successful because the leading edges of the cub's wings were badly battered from birds flying into its path as it flew across the fields.

Times have changed and new methods are being used. A most recent project is one of baiting corn fields with Avitrol 200. This toxic material is being applied under the close supervision of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. Avitrol is a fast acting toxicant which causes distress displays in the affected birds. These fright responses quickly cause the unaffected birds to leave the treated corn fields. There is no secondary effect of Avitrol on predatory animals such as dogs, cats, or hawks. Pheasants and quail have been experimentally fed entirely on this bait for periods of three weeks without apparent harmful effects.

When making aircraft treatment the following logistics must be considered:

(1) weather
(2) field hazards
(3) locating farms and fields

Many times, in mid-summer early mornings, a fog condition is present over the area to be treated. We may have to shorten our work day by several hours.

It is necessary to know of field hazards such as power lines, buildings, barns and houses. If fields are too close to housing projects or metropolitan areas they must be hand treated rather than aircraft treated.

County and topographical maps are used for finding farm and field locations. When treating a field three times it is an advantage to have the same pilot treat the same area because finding fields becomes a simple task the second and third time over.

Our rate of application is three pounds per acre on one-third of the field. For example, we use a 150 ft. swath width rather than our normal 50 ft. swath. Each week's treatment thus covers one third of the field. We treat at weekly intervals for three weeks.

In early spring roost treatment of Tergitol 15-5-9 is applied under close supervision of Bureau people. This detergent application to the roost must be closely coordinated to the weather man to accomplish the needed temperature and rain

condition. At this time it appears that the helicopter is the best craft to use for this after dark treatment.

Editors note: This presentation was followed by slides with accompanying comments.