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## METROPOLITAN AND INDUSTRIAL BIRD PROBLEMS: Panel Discussion

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## METROPOLITAN AND INDUSTRIAL BIRD PROBLEMS

Panel Moderator: Harold Coleman,  
Faultless Pest Control, Kansas City, Kansas  
1966 Chairman, National Pest Control Association  
Bird Management Committee

Anthony Clay  
Hill-Smith Systems  
Memphis, Tenn.

Kilmer Bortz  
Western Exterminating Co.  
Lutherville, Maryland

H. COLEMAN: Pest Control is very good these days, and some of the men we planned to have here didn't make it. We do have some of them --Jim Steckel, will you come up? Jim is from Torco Pest Control in Columbus, Ohio. Tony Clay from Hill-Smith down in Memphis, Kilmer Bortz from Western Exterminators in Baltimore. As a pest control industry, we are interested in bird control, especially in areas of residence, commercial buildings, food plants, mills and elevators, commercial feed lots, farms, and even area wide controls in some of our cities. We run into all kinds of problems; I suppose you men do, too.

I would like to start off with a letter we received from one of our members up in Massachusetts which points out some of the problems we may have. This was addressed to Dave Schneider concerning this panel.

"It is flattering to be asked to participate in this panel, but frankly I do not feel qualified.

"Massachusetts, in which we do the principal amount of work, has highly restrictive legislation on the exposure of toxic materials for birds. Actually, no such materials may be exposed from March 15th through November 15th to provide maximum protection for migratory birds.

"The remaining period of the year, there is a procedure involving several complicated steps whereby a location, which would be one of our accounts for example, wishes to have bird control work performed. They must make application to our Fish Game Department and this application must be referred to and approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. If a contractor, such as our company, is to be used then both the State and Federal agencies must know and approve of the contractor

in terms of his so called ability. In some circumstances it is required that a member of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service be present when the work is done.

"You can see that the communication problem, the record keeping problem, and above all, the ability to get the right people on the same spot at the same time, is so great that we don't do much of this work.

"It is my understanding that something over 40% of the national budget of the Audubon Society is raised in Massachusetts, and therefore there is an effective lobby. The Society management are understanding and sympathetic with our position, and in spite of being really decent people, they know from whence their parsnips come.

"The S.P.C.A. in Massachusetts, believe it or not, has a rather sizeable force of armed, uniformed men in radio-equipped vehicles; they forced me to remove pigeon perches from underneath the overhang of the loading platform of a sizeable dairy, where the presence of pigeons was contaminating food products, and this particular plant had been severely criticized by a Federal Food and Drug Inspector. The threat of the S.P.C.A. taking me to court was sufficient motivation for me to hustle a man over and remove the objectionable perches.

"In similar fashion, a very large food processor wished to have pigeon control performed and we offered to do the entire location without charge, using the experimental material Queletox. We did obtain the permit to do this work, but at the last moment, management of the plant felt the potential publicity might be adverse, and therefore, refused to allow us to go ahead; even on a no charge basis.

"You can see, Mr. Schneider, that Yankee kingdom is truly a haven for all sorts of "birds," and therefore my experience is so limited that I could contribute really nothing to your program. Actually, we could learn, but do no teaching." R. L. Keenan, Waltham Chemical Co.

I'm glad that this report is from only one part of the United States and I'm a long way from there. We do have our problems, but we do a little bird control work and have pretty good working relations with our people down in the Kansas City area. Despite the problems we run into, we're still able to make a little profit from some of the work we do. At this time I'll let Tony Clay from Hill-Smith Systems in Memphis give us a little report on some of his activities. Tony . . . .

A. CLAY: Thank you, Harold. He got me right at the last minute, so this is impromptu. Might be sort of a recap of what we discussed at Kansas City last year--he gave me the same topic on mills and

elevators. Really in the past year there has been a continuation of the program we're using. This is with Avitrol. Our traps are obsolete, our mechanical exclusion is obsolete, and practically all of our repellent material is obsolete. So I don't really have much to report on that. You folks want to ask some questions about some of my past experiences with some of these methods, I'd be happy to invite some questions on this. It might throw some light on the subject, mechanical exclusion, repellency, or some of those things. Anyone have a question here?

DR. SPEAR: Coming to the present, Tony, supposing you're working on a pigeon problem, you've got some doves come in there. Does this present any problem for you?

A. CLAY: I really haven't had any great experience with doves. Now we did work in one plant on President's Island in Memphis. We contracted to control pigeons, sparrows, and starlings. There are many doves there, but I only caught two doves in two years of trapping pigeons. Of course, they were released. I've never found doves affected by repellents there, and to my knowledge with the Avitrol I haven't seen any doves affected. I do know that there are not as many doves in the area as there were previously. We're now using Avitrol in the sparrow mix. I hardly think you'd find many results from it if you were using whole corn like we use for pigeon control. The only other bird that I've found affected by the Avitrol in whole kernel corn is the blue jay. Blue jays will take corn and crack it up to a size they can eat. But I don't know of any others. Cardinals haven't been affected by it or any other bird that I know of other than the blue jay or the pigeon.

H. COLEMAN: Tony, can you tell us some of the techniques you use in baiting, how you place the bait, where?

A. CLAY: Look the problem over with the manager and you'll know right away just where the main feeding spots are. But in case you must work alone, you just have to observe the area. Go there at different times during the day, spend an hour, two hours, just sitting and watching the movement of the birds--what they do, and where they go; try to locate their particular feeding area. Now you watch birds sitting up on a roof area or fuel storage tank, and maybe two or three will go to the middle of the field or grassy area and alight and peck around or to a rail siding or something of that sort. These are likely spots where you can get them to eat some bait. Pigeons go to a grassy area to pick up a little green vegetation; you're not likely to get one to eat grain there. If they go over to a railroad spur, they're more likely after grain or maybe gravel. You're likely to get some exceptional

bait-take there. If you have a flat surface where the birds are roosting, you get poor acceptance of the bait. Better acceptance is found on buildings having a gravel-type roof on it and they pick up some gravel there too. These sometimes have water pockets, low places in the roof, where the birds drink water. These are good places to bait, and we get very good control, especially in the business area. You have air conditioners with some water available to the birds. It's not too hard to get them to accept bait under these conditions. Usually we put untreated corn or grain in the vicinity, and watch the activity very closely, checking back on it every day or two, to see how soon they accept it. Sometimes we find that the birds will consume all that we put out, maybe five or ten pounds of grain, depending on the population of birds. You do the same the next day, and maybe a third time. And if they take it readily but show reluctance the second day, leave it there two or three days and try it again. If they accept it very readily, go ahead and give them the treated material.

R. SMITH: I have two questions. One is: is Avitrol considered a toxicant in Tennessee? And the other is, why do you use Avitrol?

A. CLAY: Well, on the second point: we bought into the franchise on Avitrol.

J. STECKEL: I think that's all you've got to say. (Laughter)

A. CLAY: Another thing, we have had in the last two years an alteration of the city ordinance against poisoning of pigeons. So, we're pretty well open there.

R. SMITH: You mean you can poison or you can't?

A. CLAY: We can poison pest birds within the city of Memphis. I've been informed that our Avitrol representative is here. Perhaps he can give us some light on this question.

R. SMITH: What is the legality of using Avitrol in Tennessee? Is it considered a toxicant?

H. HYATT: Used on species of birds such as gulls and starlings, yes, it is a toxicant. Used in control of pigeons and sparrows, no. It is registered with the USDA as a toxicant, though. I'm not aware of its legality in the state of Tennessee. That answer your question?

Avitrol 200 has registrations for the following baits and uses:

0.5% on wheat - for the control sparrows, certain blackbirds and cowbirds in, on, or in the area of structures,

- nesting and roosting areas. USDA No. 224-6. Apr. 17, 1964.
- 0.5% on sorghum - same as above. USDA No. 224-8. Apr. 17, 1964.
- 0.5% on mixed grains - same as above. USDA No. 224-9. Apr. 17, 1964.
- 0.5% on corn chops - same as above. USDA No. 224-11. May 8, 1964.
- 0.5% on whole corn - feral pigeons in or on the area of structures, nesting and roosting sites. USDA No. 224-12. Oct. 5, 1964.
- 1.0% on pelletized seed - control of starlings in feedlots. USDA No. 224-7. Apr. 17, 1964.
- 1.0% on double strength corn chops - control of certain black-birds, cowbirds and starlings. USDA No. 224-10. Apr. 17, 1964.
- 1.0% on whole corn - control of crows. USDA No. 224-14. May 27, 1965.

A. CLAY: Well, as far as I know about the legality of it, sparrows, starlings, and pigeons are considered pest birds, and it is legal to use poison if there is not a local ordinance against it. Of course you always have to consider local ordinance whenever you try to control any birds. If they're migratory birds or non-pest species you have to go on to Federal and State regulations.

H. COLEMAN: Tony, thank you. I think we should go ahead. The next panelist we'll hear from is Kilmer Bortz from Western Exterminators in Baltimore.

K. BORTZ: Thank you, Mr. Coleman. Gentlemen, our Baltimore birds are on top of the American league. But it's not the Baltimore Orioles I'll be talking about; it's the pest birds you have a problem with in your metropolitan area just as we do in Baltimore. And I refer to the pigeon, starling, and sparrow. You can go into town an hour before dusk in Baltimore, as in your city during the winter months, and the number of starlings that are coming downtown will astound most people. I don't think they would ever realize it if they didn't take the time to go downtown to see it. I'm going to restrict my comments to starling control and I'll use a building we treated as an example.

Basically we're ground level pest control operators. We are not steeple jacks; we are not in the window cleaning business; our background

is on the ground. There are many jobs we have had to walk away from. Let's take a routine building, a three or four story building. Maybe the majority of us here would not be apprehensive about treating it. Our first step in the treatment of this building is to get a clearance from the police department because we need necessary parking space. We also need to place ropes, to rope off the sidewalk area because we will be treating the above areas. We will rent a platform type of electric scaffolding. This will be a three-man job on a four-story building (forty by one hundred twenty feet dimensions). We will place a man up on the roof. He will treat the sculptural architecture that he has access to from the roof level. Then two men will be placed on the scaffolding, go up to the top as man number 1 comes down. They will place a repellent because we are working right in the city of Baltimore which perhaps like your city has not accepted the use of contact poisons. We will place a material that has been mentioned earlier, Roost-No-More.

I guess like any operator you can have trouble with your equipment. Well, on this example job we had trouble with our electric lift. We got only a portion of that building treated by the end of the day, actually only about one-half of the front of the building. Of course, I wanted to stay down that evening to watch the starlings come in. It was amazing because on the previous evening starlings were all over the upper levels of this building. Starlings seem to have their own particular spot that they go to; I would almost bet that the same starling goes to the same spot every night. Sometimes they get out of place and they have to fight for their spot. This particular evening when they came back, they came to the treated ledges and were unable to alight on them.

[Discussion continues on page 24.]