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WILDLIFE CONTROL AT VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT: INTRODUCING BORDER COLLIES

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Situated on an island located along a major Pacific Flyway, Vancouver International Airport (YVR) has developed a comprehensive wildlife management program in order to maintain a safe aircraft operating environment. YVR attracts a diverse range of bird species, including: ducks; gulls; herons; geese (Canada and Snow); sparrows; swallows; crows; starlings; owls; hawks; and eagles. The airport's Wildlife Management Program consists of a Habitat Management Program and a Wildlife Control Program which are both based on a database of knowledge the airport continues to build regarding the behaviour patterns of wildlife common to the airport. Operating 24-hours-per-day 365 days of the year, YVR's Wildlife Control Program annually moves close to one million birds from the aircraft operating area. Innovation and adaptability have been critical to the success of YVR's program. On foot, in trucks, or in their Zodiacs YVR's Wildlife Control Officers employ many tools in their trade, including: gas cannons; pyrotechnics (including Ruggieri pistols); live ammunition; night vision goggles; high power lights; sirens; nets and wires; traps; and wailers. In November 1999, YVR introduced two Border Collies to its wildlife control program. The introduction of these dogs was a carefully researched and orchestrated event, as the airport recognized that their success would be based on many key factors. Before any commitments were made to introduce the dogs, the airport conducted climate surveys of its staff, initiated site visits, consulted with local veterinarians and animal care specialists and held numerous discussions with the dog trainer/supplier. The program the airport initiated based on this research included the development of a comprehensive dog handler training and certification program, the establishment of policies and procedures for the care and handling of the dogs, and a detailed communications plan.