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CLINIC ON PIGEON CONTROL

Moderator: Jim Steckel
Torco Pest Control, Columbus

With: Stu Amrine
Amrine Pest Control, Marion

Mike Pompili
Health Department, Marion

In this open discussion session, led by Jim Steckel, a variety of topics and problems of particular interest to PCOs are touched upon. A tape was made during the program, then a transcript prepared. The following edited text follows the flow of questions and comments through the session.

Steckel: We were talking about repelling, but there are a number of different categories of repellents. What would be one? Sticky, tacky material; Owls; Wires; Nixalite; Noise; Lights.

Would shooting be repelling? ("No, because that's permanent-- for the one that's shot".) But, there is good evidence that when shooting is done there is some communication among birds and that some repellency results. They don't come back in the same way they always have in the past.

If we were to go through a training exercise here this afternoon, we would probably say that the first thing on any bird control job is to see if we can build the birds out: is there any screen, netting, or window that should be replaced? But, probably the thing that would come to the top of the list would be sanitation, removing the food and water sources.

Let's talk about water for a minute. If the pigeons are being attracted to the area because of a water source, are there things you can do? Dry it up is one thing, if that's possible. Let's say that you've got an area where drainage isn't very good; such as a low area, a swale area. Is there anything you can do to that area? Salting is a possibility. I've often seen that done along railroad tracks, grain elevator operations, and so forth. Salting certainly is a very common way to make that water nonpotable. How much salt and what kind of salt? Well, there are a lot of unknowns: the area to be treated, the site location. My experience has been to take rock salt that we would use to melt snow on a driveway or soften water and just throw the rock salt in the water, but I don't know that there is a good measure for it. Road oil is another possibility if the water is in pot holes of parking lots or industrial driveways.

How about a food source that you can't remove? Is there anything that you can do to that? Treat it with something that will deter the birds from eating it -- make it unappetizing. Road oil base is a possibility. Concerns would be what? Where's the oil going to go? Is there a fire hazard? Road oil can be diluted down to make it go a little further and be less messy. There are other things you can do to spilled grain on a railroad siding such as cover it with dirt.

In the case of shooting, where do you do it?

Comment: Right in the city. I did it for 22 years with a .22. No problem. Then they stopped me because at that time only police officers could carry weapons. But we still carry .22's and tranquilizers in our vehicles, and we're proposing a new law so that we can legally carry weapons and shoot the pigeons again.

Steckel: The question is whether a single shot or scatter shot is better. If you're going to use the .22, is there a better shell to use? What is that better shell? Bird shot.

Comment: There's a German-made cartridge specifically for this that the FWS can buy. I was fortunate to get my hands on some of these cartridges. They do a nice job if you want to knock off a bird or for a head shot. It's a .22 caliber shell.

Fitzwater: A .22 cap is low-powered, but it will kill farther than bird shot. I guess I've killed at about 25 feet; I've never tried much farther than that.

Steckel: I don't know whether it has been just a coincidence or not, but we've had four requests in the last three or four months to shoot a sparrow that was living within a supermarket -- a 7-day-a-week, 24-hr-a-day operation. Somehow the birds get in the back doors during loading and unloading, and the store managers shoot them because there is no other way to get them out. We had to use .22 caliber bird shot. We had one sitting on fluorescent tube, and I told the manager, "You know, I may break that tube if I hit it". He said, "Well, it's over an area where we don't have anything that the glass will get in. I need the bird out of here. Get it." We hit the tube, but we did not break it with the bird shot. I was really surprised, but we got the bird -- one bird, in that case.

The first case I had, the bird had been in the store for eight weeks before they notified us. The Health Dept. had finally said, either get that bird out of there, or we shut the door tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock. So this was a Sunday night job before the 8 o'clock Monday morning. They always want to take you down to the line! We went in there at midnight. A local policeman went with me, and he held people at the door so that we wouldn't get an inside circus. We couldn't see the bird. It turned out that the help had been shooting at it with air pistols and swatting at it with brooms; they had been at that bird so much that it never did fly. That bird just went from one aisle to another, and you were lucky if you could ever see him. He could get under the aisle, but you had to go out around it; and I can tell you that was a real task. We had help; the policeman radioed down and got some of his friends to come over. We had enough weapons in there to look like we were ready to start our own coup de grace, but that bird had been shot at enough that he no longer was going to get up in the air where anyone could get to him. Word to the wise: get them early if you can.

One of the things I think we have heard many different times is that shooting is a possibility. On bird control projects many times you get down to where you've got just a few birds left, and you just can't get a hold of those with your normal techniques, whether it's been Rid-a-Bird or Roost-no-More or whatever. You get down to where maybe shooting is required. But, if you're going to shoot, you've got to be careful. It's not something that will work everywhere and under every circumstance.

It is apparent that in pigeon control or any of the other bird control areas that if you can incorporate more than one technique, you're probably going to be more effective. If you can tie together the fact that there is a dead bird with some scaring devices or with some lights that tie the different senses together, the effect is greater; they seem to synergize one another.

I saw this happen in the early days of bird control in Springfield, Illinois where George Hockenyos had a starling problem on the buildings in the downtown area. The technique that he was using involved a large mist blower like you'd spray tall trees. By using an ammonia compound and putting a little detergent in it, so that it wouldn't spot the windows on downtown department stores and

small offices and banks, there was enough of an irritant to move the birds out.

The engine ran at a very high RPM in order to blow this material on the wall, and the birds associated the experience with the sound of that engine. He was doing the work at night, so he was using a large floodlight to see where they were; and then he would blow the material out. He had done that operation for, I believe, three nights. The next night, when he started up his engine, the birds went. From then on he never had to spray anything; all he had to do was start up his engine and ride through flashing the light for a couple of nights, and they were gone. The next time, about the 6th or 7th night, all he had to do was come around with a big light, flash it around, and they would go. They finally left Springfield, after 11 days, never to return.

What we are trying to say here is that in tying together two or three techniques that affected them, they were able to hear some things and associate that with a bad experience they'd had when they got a bath in ammonia. They associated the flashing light with that bad experience, and after they'd had that experience a couple of times they didn't really need to have the whole thing to get them moving. When the engine fired up, the reaction was, "Oh, oh, here comes that ammonia at me again. I'd better get out of here." Later on, all that was needed was a flashing light and they left.

So if we're going to think about shooting, we need to think of it as the part that really tells them there is something lethal going on. Where we have used distress calls, if you can use them in conjunction with killing a few birds, it appears that it makes the distress cry a whole lot more effective than if you haven't had any real pressure on the flock.

How do we bring these different kind of stresses onto the bird? There is the so-called pecking order within the bird system: there appear to be the leader birds, then the lieutenants, and then come the workers or the privates. It also appears that the effectiveness of your program is very much proportional to the way you deal with the leader birds. If you can deal a real blow to the leader birds, your program is effective much quicker, lasts much longer, and is more broadly effective than if you can't deal with that leader or those leader birds.

In the case of pigeons, because of their colorfulness, you frequently can determine the leader bird. If you observe them over a period of time, you can pick out which one is the leader bird --- the one who determines that this is a safe place to come down or to eat. The bird that seems to be a flock leader is the first one to come into the area and signals the area is safe for the flock.

- Comment: If you were to arrive on the scene where a pigeon problem had just started and you were able to identify and shoot the leader, what effect do you think it would have on the rest of that flock?
- Steckel: You have a great effect on that flock. There is a real disorganization that develops within that group of birds.
- Comment: Do you think that you can control this problem, by just knocking off this one bird? Will they move somewhere else?
- Steckel: No. But your control program takes a real step forward when that happens. It's been that way, at least in my experience in the case of pigeons.
- Comment: It won't last very long, Jim. Within 12 hours they've got a new leader. Then you've got the whole thing to do over again.
- Steckel: In many flocks it is very difficult to tell who the leader is. In a star-

ling flock you can tell the leaders, because they'll be the first ones to come into the feeding site. They'll be the first ones to drop down, and the first ones to get back to the roosting site at night. They'll be the ones that come and sit on the outroost and finally move in; then everybody else comes in. But they all look alike, and so you really can't keep track of them. It's been just my guess, that some of the jobs that we have done with Avitrol that have been very effective have been so because we quickly hit on those leader birds. We've done the same job at the next farm; and we haven't had half the luck, and we just worked like the dickens. I've often thought it was the way we affected those leader birds.

It is to your advantage to be able to identify them and try to destroy them, and if you are observing birds you can always determine who the leader birds are.

- Comment: I disagree with you. I let the leader bird come in and pop off the other ones, because the others will always follow that one bird.
- Comment: I want to ask you about your distress calls.
- Steckel: If you're going to work with starlings, I think you probably should use a starling distress call. There are distress calls for starlings; there are distress calls for redwings.
- Comment: But what I want to know is, how do you make one for pigeons?
- Fitzwater: You don't. We've hit them with a rubber hose and got a "gup, gup, gup". There's no distress cry for pigeons, as far as I know.
- Comment: No one has mentioned that when using Avitrol with a species which may not have a distress call that an affected bird appears obviously in distress. This behavior definitely does affect the flock.
- Steckel: Avitrol is registered as a flock-disturbing device. How it's mixed has something to do with its effect. Originally, we felt that there would be almost no lethal result. We were mixing it 1:35 in the case of sparrows. We were down to 1:24 for starlings and 1:15 for pigeons. Now we are down to 1:10 for most birds and the possibility of a bird getting more than one treated kernel is pretty good.
- Wetzel: I understand that they communicate and that there are distress signals and there are warning signals. Is there a difference?
- Steckel: Yes!
- Comment: All of these programs involve Fish and Game personnel, County Departments of Agriculture, and usually City Police Departments, and we haven't had any problem with non-target species. I think it is basically because our perches are located at spots where you've got large numbers of pigeons. Normally, when you've got a large pigeon population you don't have other non-target species.
- Steckel: Don't you have mourning doves flocking in with your feral pigeons?
- Comment: At the granaries and in agricultural situations, yes; but not in downtown Toledo.
- Steckel: That's great. I find in the urban areas that I have as many mourning doves now as I have pigeons, and I have as many people calling for control of mourning doves as I do for control of pigeons. They're noisy; they're dirty; they're living with the

pigeons; they're living in the backyard arbors.

One of the points that I'd like to go back to is where we have been working with Rid-A-Bird materials, we have found that birds seem to become very nervous after contact with either the endrin or extex-containing fluid. As a result they don't go down quickly. At first they seem to flutter a good bit in their flight, but they don't stay in flight very long. Then their flight isn't very strong; they will fly up but then fall back down again. Our experience has been that they generally get to the ground, and they will generally fly into a position where they can run or flutter. They will get themselves into a corner, in a thicket, or behind a board where they have some protection. I've rarely found them out in the open, and you're telling me they're dropping on the tops of houses. This hasn't been our experience.

- Comment: We know where the birds are going downtown, and we know where they're going in the neighborhoods. We check those places frequently, and find them on the roofs.
- Steckel: Does anyone else have any experience they can share with us on where they find the birds that have been affected by the Rid-a-Bird fluid?
- Comment: What's happening right here on the campus?
- Jackson: The experience here was that the birds dropped rather close to the sites, either on the cement right next to the building or sometimes up on the ledges. Since they were up on ledges, a lot of birds fell from sitting positions on those ledges.
- Steckel: That was with a Rid-a-Bird perch using the fluid containing endrin?
- Jackson: I think so.
- Comment: I think they were using Tanglefoot or Roost-No-More in between the metal perches.
- Comment: That's only good right on the edge of the building, isn't it?
- Jackson: The birds typically were roosting along the outer ledge, so this was an attempt to get those birds; but as you noticed there are some birds that have not been removed.
- Steckel: I have used it on state turnpike bridges. I don't know whether you are aware that pigeons will be underneath a lot of those bridges. I have a contract to do one interstate highway across the state. We used the Rid-a-Bird pigeon perch. It was a very effective tool. Pigeons walk all over everything. You could put that perch any place you want to, and the pigeon at one time or another would get on it. Since they just wander all over under there, we basically put them where they are easily serviced.
We had a one-year contract; and we put them up with a liquid-nail material, so we could take them back down again. The effectiveness was pretty quick; in less than a month the problem was under control. However, we constantly had birds coming back in there. A lot of the area is corn country, and there were birds from all over; but it worked out very well.
- Question: Any secondary problems with those materials?
- Steckel: No secondary poisonings. A great deal of work has been done on that. We had tested cats in one situation, and the only cats we ever killed were the ones that got so many feathers in them that they died. Not much of the fenthion would be absorbed through the feet.

- Question: Somebody brought up the question of hawks. Is there any program that anyone knows of where you can rent or lease trained hawks that kill pigeons? One of my clients is very interested in it.
- Comment: Usually there's a falconer's club in a state that would have a list of the people who had falcons, and you might be able to talk some of them into doing it.
- Question: But can a hawk in flight distinguish a dove in flight from a pigeon?
- Steckel: He doesn't have to.
- Comment: Do you know where these perches can be used? Could you make a structure in which to place the perch, like a little bird apartment house, and set it on a pole in the vicinity of your problem building? You could put your perches in there and say, "There's my structure."
- Steckel: I really don't think so. You can get in trouble a lot of ways, and I think that's one of them. I can't answer your question, but I don't think so.
- Comment: So it's got to be some other kind of structure rather than one that you put up.
- Steckel: I've asked a couple of fellows to share with us an experience they are going through. One is a city health department officer, and the other is a pest control operator that works in his city. They are concerned with the municipal pigeon control program. I think you said you had councilmen talking with you, and everyone who is in a bird control operation has had or will have somebody talking to them about that. I thought it might be helpful for you to hear some of the things that they have been able to do and some of the things that they haven't been able to do. Mike Pompili is from the Marion, Ohio Health department, and Stewart Amrine is the PCO in his community.
- Amrine: The main concern came to my attention through calls from downtown merchants; and residential complaints. People were saying, "My yard's a mess, my house is a mess;" merchants were saying, "My sidewalk is full of bird droppings, can't you do something." My reply was that if you wish to contract with us to take care of a bird problem on your specific building, we can do that. There was no city program, but most of the complainants asked, "Why doesn't the city have a program?" Well, at that point I said it's about time to get hold of the health department and see what we can do, because it was a major problem in the city.
- So, I contacted Mr. Pompili, explained the complaints we'd been having, and suggested that it might be a good idea if we did some research and made some observations.
- That's just what we started to do. I took the men that worked for me, and we conducted observations over six to seven months. In the process of our observing, getting data and counts, we started getting in touch with other people who were necessary to form a bird control program within the city. It seemed that the central point for pigeons is the largest structure in the downtown area. We had as many as 13 to 16 separate flocks, all congregated within a certain area. We've gone out at 5:30 in the morning and watched them. Their flight patterns over a period of two to three months were very, very regular. They circled, different ones to the north; others to east and west. They went to different areas where we assumed they were feeding. Grain mills are in an almost circular pattern around the town. When the grain was being put

into grain bins, we had no possible way of removing food or poisoning the birds.

The potential dangers and hazards were beyond normal procedures, so we just did our observations, contacted the people, and tried to set up what we felt would be a compatible program with everybody in the city being involved. We've got industrial sites; the whole SW area is industrial with structures 100 - 150 feet high, girders, which are really difficult places to get in and do baiting or make an application of anti-roost materials.

But we felt that if a concentrated effort were made with participation by the industries and downtown merchants, we could effectively come up with a program that would be successful. Well, we haven't gotten very far. The people are very, very negative. We haven't gotten any response from bird lovers, the Audubon Society, as far as any objection to what we do. We have had control programs before with the city people where they were strict on baiting.

By this time, the pigeon count has gone from a thousand or two thousand up to 10-15 thousand. At this point we are stalemated. The proposed program is outlined in a presentation telling how we work, what we'll do. We're trying to combine not only our agency as a pest control operating firm, but the county officials, road workers, highway crews, and city maintenance people as far as the clean-up program into one big program. We have gotten absolutely nowhere.

Pompili:

I'll give you some background on how we've gone through this whole process since Stu contacted me about the problem.

We have handled these complaints before on a nuisance basis. We get a complaint about bird droppings on the sidewalk. We get hold of the owner of the building and say, "Hey, take care of it. Get it cleaned up." Generally we've succeeded. We've had only one guy who didn't cooperate. We threatened to take him to court, and we got it cleaned up. The problem we were facing, one common to all communities, is single treatments. They put Tanglefoot out on one corner; the birds move to another corner. You're not solving anything. You're just moving the problem. So we said the only way to solve the problem effectively and save tax dollars was for everybody in the community to get involved. I have to admit it's an Utopian idea. But we thought we would give it a shot, and I spent a lot of time on this also.

We sent a letter to all the downtown merchants and invited them to a meeting. We got about 12 out of about 50. We did get some that were very interested. What we are trying to do is switch the leadership over to the downtown merchants, to get them involved in getting everybody together. People in the community trust the downtown merchants and are more receptive to one of their own coming in to talk to them than a government agent telling them what to do.

For our first meeting we made slides of the important problems. It's very important to use pictures of your own community; they have more of an effect than slides from elsewhere. Don't bring slides from California or Texas.

We did have some outside speakers, though, on the problems, public health significance, things of this nature. From the pest control industry I did not pick an individual. I told the industry, "You pick out who you want". Our community likes local people; they don't want people from the outside. They selected the pest control operator.

Then I had to see if they could come up with a program. We both knew it was a gamble. We sent letters to Chamber of Commerce and manufacturing companies. That's where we're presently at.

Industry is interested. If you have industry in your town, you

have a half-way decent chance. At least 12 industries will get together, and we will let them get coordinated. As for downtown merchants, I know what's going to happen: they're not going to do it. That's the way it is. And because of that, I'm going to have to go around next spring and put them on orders. But from my standpoint, when I give them orders, I cannot have it come back to me that I didn't give them a chance to do it themselves. That's how I look at it. I don't want the Health Department out there doing it; we don't know enough about it. But I've got a public health problem. And from a public relations standpoint, I have to work with those downtown merchants and industry on a lot of other things. In the long run I think I'll have a lot better success this way than coming in with orders to begin with.

Question: Do you have substantial evidence that this is a public health problem?

Pompili: Let's take a look at public health departments in general. Our emphasis is on the prevention of disease. There is evidence of the possibility of diseases. Like with measles, you could knock off all the immunizations until you got measles going again. It could be the same situation; you could ignore the problem and let all the pigeons come in, and you have a histoplasmosis problem.

From a preventative public health point of view, I can't allow that. That's what I'm in business for -- to stop disease, not wait until it appears and then stop it. Unfortunately the general public lives in the feeling of crisis here, and I can't change that. But I will stand up and defend my side.

Comment: The city doesn't have any money to pay for this program for the downtown. There's federal money for just everything these days. If you can justify getting it, you could use it for this program.

Pompili: Everybody knows my community is extremely conservative, 38,000 people, a rural community. We do have a federal block grant. I have no building code. There were no housing codes. I have little in the way of federal money or regulations. You have to adjust to that.

Comment: Do you know of any bird control programs run by city agencies that are ongoing and viable? We have a city of 280,000 (City of St. Paul). I am the pest control operator for the city, and we have a pigeon population of 10-15,000. We are mandated by ordinance to do the program.

We realize that there are many private pest control operators in the city doing an ongoing program for rodent and pigeon control for the private business people. We meet with these people and know where they are operating. We know the resources of the Fish and Wildlife Service; we know the scope of the problems.

Steckel: Whom do you take your directions from? The Council that gave you the ordinance?

Comment: We've had this ordinance for 14 years, and we were first instructed by FWS personnel, who put on a demonstration program for us. Since that time we have constructed it with our own personnel. We work generally in the railroad marshalling yards, around the grain terminals, even though there are some ongoing programs. We stay off private property. We generally hesitate to go on industrial and commercial property, but some of the problems this year -- I think you're familiar with the grain strike -- were there. Truckers were lined up by the thousands; they spilled grain all over the city. The barges on the river are the most we've ever seen this year. As they are loading they don't shut off

the spout and spilled tons of grain on the top of these barges. We made an effort to clean them.

Now we've got bird problems with our airport. We have a program going on through the mayor's office, FWS, port authority, our own office; and we're to get an old barge across from the airport. We're trying to put bait on the top of the barge, and we hope to help this problem. We've had many bird strikes, something that we've not had before. It's a matter of emergency with us right now.

I don't understand how the city of Marion ever hopes to get this problem under control. If you go out next spring and write these companies up, even after giving them a fair warning, all they're going to do is come in and hire PCO's on a one-time deal to clean up the problem. You really are doing nothing other than making them spend a little money one time. You're not trying to set up any type of ongoing program where you make these companies, month after month and year after year, attend to the problem.

I imagine most of you represent private enterprise, but you also have to be extremely aware of the tightness of the budget in government agencies. People want more and more services, yet the first thing they'd say when something like this comes up is "Why don't you get it out of the city coffers, or out of the federal government?"

- Comment: If you're in the business of protecting public health ahead of time, before the problem arises, then you're going to have to have an ongoing program that takes care of this bird problem before it arises.
- Pompili: But you have priorities. I'm more concerned in our city if I have a public health problem in business. But I also have public health problems in housing where I have to get water into some houses; I have to get out-houses out of some areas. That's where my number one priorities are. I've got a limited budget, and you have to adjust to that; and in your own businesses you do the same.
- Comment: I understand that, but you might as well not be doing anything at all and spending all your money somewhere else if you attempt to do one-tenth of a job. I mean you're wasting your money.
- Steckel: I think what Pompili is saying is that he's trying to mention to them in a kind way that maybe they're wasting their money. If they were to work together, it might be dollar-wise; they might spend fewer dollars than if they were to contract individually.
- Comment: That manufacturer doesn't care whether his yard is full of bird dung? The downtown merchant doesn't care if there are roosts?
- Steckel: I don't think that's really the case. I really think the manufacturer does care. We do a good bit of bird control work, and a major portion of it we do for manufacturers; and they aren't buying one-time services. They're buying continuing services, and I can't stand up here and tell you that they're just buying out of the goodness of their heart. They're buying because the union says, if you don't do it, you got big troubles with us. That's where the real pressure comes from. I think they're going to find out some place along the line in Marion, Ohio that if they want this to sell in industry they'll have to get a few of those heavy manufacturing unions involved, and you'll be surprised how interested industry gets.
- Pompili: Our problem is not with big industry. They've been very cooperative. Our problem is the little guy.

- Jeff Jackson: I'd just like to point out that Marion isn't the only city that has this problem. I think extension wildlife specialists have described how county agents see bird damage control problems. Pigeon calls are one of my standard calls. If they come from a city, the county agent is usually tightly in with the city council and city fathers. Finally one day they say, as they probably said five years before, "We've got this terrible problem. What can the extension service do?" Then they say, "Well, we've got this wildlife specialist who will come in." So then I put it on my calendar and three weeks later I get there. I stay overnight, have a night on the town looking at all the places where the pigeons are, and come up with a little plan to train the county agent. Then they're all set to go. But they do nothing, because they find that it's not easy and it's not cheap and it's very complicated. Certainly people in business might hire a PCO for their particular problem; but you have this abandoned railroad side building, and that just goes on and on. That is the real world, and that's how the real world operates; we have to accept that. Sometimes you do some good and sometimes you don't, but pigeon problems in cities are situations where generally a poor job is done.
- Comment: A comment to this gentlemen. Are you a PCO? As a conscientious PCO, any time you attack any problem you're confronted with, the first thing is public education. You specifically go to talk to these people who have a problem and explain everything involved: why you have to maintain this as an ongoing program, the complications involved, why this can't be just a one-time, hit or miss operation. You can't go in there and just hit him for the dollars and get out. You have to be fully aware of your responsibility and your obligations as far as taking care of the problem and giving your client what is really the proper thing to do.
- Wetzel: You've got to get their attention first before you can educate them.
- Comment: What percentage of the businesses are you taking care of, I mean of all the businesses in Marion that are having a pigeon problem?
- Amrine: Right now about 10 percent.
- Comment: What about the other 90 percent that also are creating the problem?
- Amrine: Well, we're working on it.
- Comment: Some people you're just not going to be able to sell.
- Pompili: That's where I come in with enforcement.
- Comment: What product are you going to use if you do this program?
- Amrine: We use various things. We use anti-roost material, strychnine baiting, depending on the problem. A lot of times we have done the buildings in previous years. We apply anti-roost materials to the surrounding buildings to keep them off at least one building at the main site where they come in. Then you have them eliminated in the area.
- Steckel: Are there other cities that you are aware of that have ongoing bird control or bird management plans or programs?
- Wetzel: Meadville, Pa., Washington, Pa., Oil City, Pa.

- Marsh: In downtown Cleveland the pest control operators do bird control work downtown. Generally, health departments have been involved in all kinds of vector control but not so much bird control.
- Steckel: I'd like to hit on the subject of Avitrol. How many of you at the present time are using Avitrol in some of your bird control activities? Most everybody. If you're using it in pigeon control, how are you blending the material, and what are you finding to be the best materials?
You're blending it 1:19 and you're using whole kernel shelled corn, double strength (1%), for urban use? Any of the rest of you have anything that's doing a good job for you in the area of Avitrol? Everybody is using about the same tool?
- Comment: I haven't found Avitrol all that much help. We've been using it about 1:10. We still like the strychnine better. We get quicker results.
- Steckel: Do you have limitations on when you can use strychnine?
- Comment: We use it only in the winter time when snow is on the ground and when protected birds are gone.
- Wetzel: I need some help. I do a lot of city and community work. I've been doing this for 32 years and have never had a problem using strychnine. A borough of about 2800 residents over the years has had a problem with pigeons and has been trying to control it alone. Recently a tax of 1 mill was passed to pay for professional services.
We went in and surveyed the town; then we made recommendations to the council. We gave them a choice: Avitrol, strychnine, or Roost-No-More. We have a representative on the council who is a game commissioner. He said, "Look, I want to get rid of the damn things. I don't want to be fooling around; I want strychnine."
We have a registered label, 0.6% strychnine, EPA registered, registered in the State of Pennsylvania. We geared up for the program. We had good PR relations and we had the press and radio with us. An article came out in the newspaper that we were going to use a registered avicide consisting of 0.6% strychnine.
One morning I was sitting in my office. A guy came in, clicked his heels, opened his coat, showed me a gun, a pair of handcuffs, and a billy club. He said, "I'm an officer of the law. Are you Bill Wetzel?"
I said, "Yes."
He said, "Is this true what I read in the newspaper?"
I said, "What are you reading?"
"You're going to do a bird service up here at so-and-so county."
I said, "Yes."
"You're going to use strychnine?"
I said, "Yes."
"I want to tell you something -- don't do it or I'll arrest you and everybody that's involved in the program. I'm an arm of the law."
- Wetzel: He is an arm of the law. He's sworn in for every police action in the state of Pennsylvania. He's a member of the ASPC. And everyone of his brothers has the same authority throughout the U.S. I've got to find out whether I can use strychnine.
I cannot use it because he says it's inhumane. He has written testimony from toxicologists from all over the country that says it's inhumane. And he's going to stop the use of it. I need some help. These people are in desperate need of a service, and you

can't do this with Ornitrol. Those birds don't live that long.

Comment: How can that guy tell you that strychnine is inhumane? How does he know the pain thresholds?

Wetzel: The toxicologist has stated this. I've gone to the District Attorneys in the counties that I work in and they wouldn't even handle it. My company attorney says the penalties are severe: \$25,000 fine, 5 years in jail. They said, "Don't do it." He's going to charge me with inhumane treatment, with inhumanity.

Fitzwater: Has he defined inhumane treatment of animals?

Wetzel: This will have to go to court.

Comment: I expect that if this attitude continues, we probably will lose the use of strychnine. There will be a public outcry sooner or later. We will have to go to Avitrol or other techniques.

Wetzel: He said, "If I get a complaint that you or anybody else is treating rats inhumanely with baits, I'll arrest you or anyone else involved in the programs. I went to the County Vector Control Center, and they know that he will stop them from killing rats.

Comment: Have you found that there is a difference between Tanglefoot, Roost-No-More, 4-the-birds, or any of the other materials used as sticky repellents for pigeon control?

Air Force: Before we could authorize the use of any of those, we had to run a test. We paid a research organization to do that. We found no significant statistical difference between any of these materials. We also found that axel grease in a caulking gun works about as well.

The criteria we used for analysis was to pen the birds in an aviary and give them a choice of feeding at the treated site. We analyzed the frequency with which they sat on it and the duration of their stay. We tested over a 4-year period. We used fresh birds once a season. They were not conclusive tests as we did not find significant differences. Any of the materials tended to work.

Comment: What was the effect of environmental variables: hot or cold?

Air Force: We did the tests in Florida, so it was hot most of the time. We found that all the materials lost their effectiveness through time.

Schneider: A question about the different formulations. George Hockenyos put together a lot of experimental stuff he did with mixing different ingredients for making sticky repellent. NPCA has the stuff; it's in an interim bird control manual. As far as I know it's never been published. It always impressed me that George did all this testing, -- different ingredients for hot and cold, this and that.

Rambo: There is a bird control manual that was being developed several years ago. Jim Steckel was on that committee. There is no NPCA manual on bird control right now. But the information in the file that Jim has is probably the most comprehensive collection of material that's been brought together. We have to get together to get the manual out.

Comment: If you're working with these materials that are non-toxic, can you apply them to a job and get paid for it?

Steckel: Can you make up this material if you have the skill for it and can you apply it to the job without concern for the lack of label?

Concensus: No, if it's a chemical that "repels or mitigates" a bird, it is covered by EPA registration requirements.

Steckel: Moth balls is one that does have to have a label. We've had naphthalene flakes as a repellent for birds, and we knew that somewhere between two and five pounds/1000 ft³ air space would do. You have the flakes all over, and if somebody moves in and doesn't like the mess, you have a problem. Carl Griswald of Wil-Kil indicated that if you take old panty hose, cut them off, and put a pound down each leg, you can tack as many as you need up on rafters. After the birds are gone and the people don't want them any longer, you can take them down.