

Coexisting with Canada Geese

An advocate's guide for preventing
roundups in your community



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES



How to use this toolkit

We fight the big fight for all animals, but we can't do it without your help. This toolkit is designed to add power to your passion; to enable you to be the most effective advocate for the geese in your community.

Where there are open, grassy spaces near water, there are geese. Where there are geese, there are droppings, and therein lies the main problem that many people have with these otherwise mostly harmless birds. Conflicts with geese lead to inhumane, ineffective and unnecessary roundups and killing. By adopting an effective, humane Canada goose management plan, your community can avoid these extreme measures..

This toolkit is designed to empower advocates like you to take action to help the geese in your community. Many people believe that the voice of a large, national animal welfare organization is enough to protect animals, but the voice of a constituent—yours!—is an incredibly powerful tool in the fight to protect geese. Local decision-makers want to hear from *you*, not an outsider. A groundswell of local opposition to a geese cull—or support of a humane geese management plan—has the greatest impact. This toolkit teaches you how best to voice your opinion and how to inspire others to do

- **Learn the issue:** Knowing more about the types of conflicts your community might have with geese can help you better understand how to address them humanely.
- **Gather information:** Asking key questions of the community and its leaders will equip you with the details needed to develop your strategy.
- **Take action:** What should you do? Here you'll find steps you can take to oppose lethal management and to encourage the adoption of a humane geese management plan.
- **Helpful tools:** Communicating effectively is paramount to success. We've included sample language for everything from social media posts to testimony, as well as facts sheets you can distribute to your community.

the same. The toolkit includes the following sections:

Don't have much time? We recognize that life is filled with competing priorities, and we applaud you for making the geese in your community one of them! Following this toolkit from beginning to end will enable you to make the greatest possible impact, but if you only have a few moments to spare, skip straight to the Take Action section on page 9. There you will find tips for actions that require less time yet still make a big impact, such as posting on social media or writing a letter to the editor. The Helpful Tools section (page 13) makes these actions easy by providing sample language.

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Learn the issue

THE HISTORY

After nearly being driven to extinction by over-hunting and habitat loss, Canada geese rebounded when wildlife managers bred captive flocks in the 1960s and released them throughout the country. The descendants of these captive-bred birds—who had clipped wings—never learned to migrate, giving rise to what we now call resident Canada geese: those who stay in the lower 48 states year-round. The United States also provides home to migratory Canada geese who migrate to Canada to nest in the spring. Migratory and resident Canada geese differ in behavior but not in biology; they are the same species of geese and are both protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Now, populations of resident Canada geese are increasing throughout most of the U.S. The impeccably mowed lawns found in our suburban landscape (e.g., parks, golf courses, cemeteries, lakeside communities, etc.) provide perfect habitat and nesting opportunities for these grass-grazing birds. Conflicts with resident Canada geese mainly occur in spring and summer when people take exception to the droppings appearing in backyards and recreational areas.

ABOUT CANADA GEESE

Canada geese are grazers and prefer grass, especially fertilized lawn grass. They tend to forage in areas with open sight lines and access to water where they can see and escape predators.

Mated geese pair off in late winter and defend their preferred nesting sites—they typically use the same nest site year after year. They also defend their goslings until they are 10 weeks old and can fly.

Adult Canada geese molt (completely replace their flight feathers) each summer and cannot fly during this six-week period. After adults complete the molt and young geese grow their first flight feathers, they begin to travel in flocks. Resident Canada geese usually move only short distances for the winter, but bad weather can cause them to move hundreds of miles in search of food and open water.

RELEVANT LAWS

Federal law protects Canada geese. It is illegal to harm geese, their eggs, or their nests in the United States without permission from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Geese may be harassed or scared away without a permit as long as the geese, goslings, eggs and nests are not harmed. The USFWS allows communities to treat resident Canada goose eggs to prevent hatching (a process called addling) after registering online.

CONFLICTS WITH GEESE

Wherever there are Canada geese, there are droppings, and therein lies the main problem that many people have with these mostly harmless birds. Although most complaints are simply about the presence of droppings, sometimes people express concerns about public health and safety, but research has not found any significant health threats from goose feces.

Other conflicts include potential traffic hazards as geese cross roadways or risks to aircraft by geese living near airports. Geese can also cause conflicts when they defend their young from people who come too close to the nest. Geese rarely attack; when people are injured, it usually results from a startled person falling down rather than from direct contact with a goose.



THE PROBLEM WITH CANADA GEESE ROUNDUPS

When Canada geese are deemed a nuisance or threat, they are sometimes rounded up and killed, a process that is inhumane, ineffective and unnecessary.

Most roundups occur during the birds' annual molt when they are growing new flight feathers and can't fly—from mid-June through July—making them easy targets. Young birds will not have developed the ability to fly yet and are easily gathered in roundups. Wildlife agents set up portable pens and herd the geese inside, separating the adults from their goslings.

The Canada geese are usually then packed in crates and killed by carbon dioxide gas (a painful and distressing death), often in small chambers on the back of trucks brought directly to the roundup site.

Other times, the geese are trucked to slaughterhouses to be killed and processed. Because meat from federally protected birds cannot be sold, it may be offered to food banks to create the impression that the killing was a charitable act. However, goose meat is often contaminated with lead, pesticides and other toxicants, making it unsuitable for human consumption. Food banks often reject these donations of goose meat.

Commercial pest control firms and the taxpayer-funded U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services carry out many roundups. Such roundups are not illegal, despite the fact that the birds are a federally protected species, so long as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grants permission for the roundup.

Property owners can also decide to have geese killed (if granted a permit by the USFWS). For public property such as parks, managers may initiate the decision, but local elected officials are ultimately responsible. Where homeowners associations manage common areas, HOA-elected boards have the final say.

Roundups and killing do not solve the problem. They may provide a temporary fix, but in the long run, roundups just free up prime real estate for more geese to move in to. The best way to solve conflicts with Canada geese is with a multi-pronged plan that humanely reduces the population and changes the habitat so that it's less attractive to geese.

COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE PLAN

For years, many communities have used humane programs to successfully resolve conflicts with resident Canada geese. The goal of these programs is to address site-specific conflicts and to reduce them to an acceptable level. Even if it were desirable, it's not possible to eliminate geese from a community.

Any control program must first begin with a plan. Here's how to start:

1. Examine how, when and why geese use the site.
2. Select the best combination and timing of techniques to make your site less attractive to geese.
3. Develop a plan for how you will apply these techniques at your site.
4. Implement your plan.
5. Monitor how it works, adjusting where needed.

GeesePeace™, an organization dedicated to building better communities through innovative, effective and humane solutions to wildlife conflicts, has developed resources that can help you plan a control program. Visit geesepeace.com for more information.

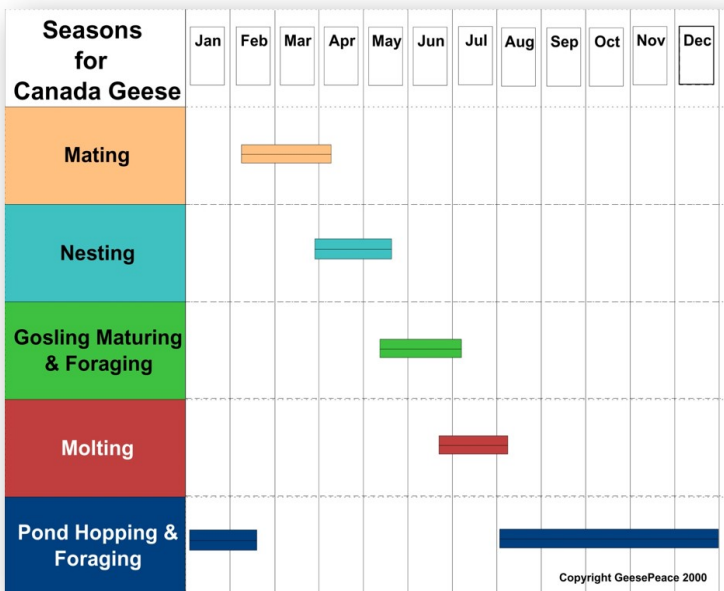
There is no single quick fix that will resolve human-geese conflicts at every site. Instead, you'll need to use a well-designed, integrated program,

Successful plans combine two or three of the following key components:

1. Curtailing reproduction.
2. Site aversion (harassing or scaring geese to teach them the site is not safe).
3. Habitat modification.

Effective geese management programs typically follow a seasonal timeline:

- December to March: Organize the community, identify likely nesting sites, and develop a plan.
- February to March: Train volunteers or employees to addle eggs.
- Late March and April to early May: Locate nests and addle.
- Mid-May to midsummer (up to molt): Harass adult geese so they leave the site.
- Late June to August: No harassment—geese are molting and need to stay where they are. Repellents may be effective.
- Fall: Resume harassment, if needed.
- February to March: If harassment was resumed in fall, stop it while geese establish nest sites. You want to know where the nests are so you can addle the eggs later. Harassing geese away from nest sites can result in goslings hatched nearby who contribute to the overall population and interfere with pre-molt harassment.



For more details on the following components, please see the humane goose management plan and information guide at humanesociety.org/geese.

Key component: Curtailing reproduction

Geese are often philopatric—when sexually mature, they return to the nest where they hatched. Curtailing reproduction can mean fewer geese will nest at a given site in the future. The most immediate benefit from curtailing reproduction is that adult geese are not tied to rearing flightless goslings and can be readily convinced to leave.

Addling commonly refers to any process by which an egg ceases to be viable. Eggs can be humanely addled by oiling, removing them from the nest or replacing them with dummy eggs.

A contraceptive—nicarbazin, sold under the brand name OvoControl—is also registered to reduce hatching and manage populations humanely.

Anyone seeking to curtail reproduction of any bird is responsible for complying with all applicable laws and regulations, including registering with appropriate agencies and obtaining permits. Please see our Canada goose egg addling manual for detailed instructions and information. Find it at humanesociety.org/geese.

Key component: Site aversion

Site aversion—harassing or scaring geese away so they learn your site is not a safe place—is an effective technique for solving conflicts with geese when used in conjunction with an egg addling program. Site aversion efforts are most effective before nesting season in the spring and after geese regain their flight feathers in the summer.

Specially trained “goose dogs” can be very effective for deterring geese from a site. These dogs work with a handler to chase geese both on land and in water, making the geese feel unsafe and encouraging them to fly elsewhere for their annual molt. (Dogs who are not properly trained or not working with a handler typically chase birds into the water but don’t follow them. Therefore, the geese, quickly learn the dog is not a real threat.) Dogs must never catch or harm geese, and they must be well-treated and kept safe on the job as the valued employees they are.

Lasers and other light-emitting devices specially designed to scare birds can also be effective at dusk as geese settle down for the night. Scaring birds away from night roosts means they will start their day elsewhere.

Additionally, two chemicals are registered in the United States as Canada goose repellents. One causes digestive irritation, while the other, when sprayed on grass, makes the grass unpalatable to geese. These repellents wash off when it rains and are mowed off when the grass is cut, so they need to be reapplied often. Repellents teach geese to avoid a site, but they work best when there is a repellent-free area nearby where geese are tolerated or welcome.

Key component: Habitat modification

The goals of habitat modification are to reduce food, reduce preferred nesting and brood-rearing areas, and increase the birds' sense of wariness or insecurity. You can do this reducing the amount of lawn area and the area of young shoots geese prefer within lawn areas, as well as reducing sight lines and limiting access to open water to increase wariness and to make geese less comfortable. Leaving areas to "naturalize" creates a complex landscape, allowing predators to find cover for hunting.

Complementary component: Stop feeding

Even the best site aversion techniques fail in areas where people feed geese. Geese will congregate where food is easy to find, increasing the amount of droppings and conflicts with people in that area. Geese may also become aggressive with other geese or even people as they fight over food.

Canada geese do not need food from humans. Even in severe weather, these birds can move considerable distances to better forage when necessary, and they're capable of finding nutritionally appropriate food for themselves.

If fed an inappropriate diet—such as human foods and commercial poultry feeds—young waterfowl are prone to develop a wing deformity called angel wing, slipped wing or dropped wing. This permanent deformity prevents or limits flight—a very severe handicap for a wild bird. Inappropriate food can cause other less obvious problems by replacing nutritious food with "empty calories," much like chips and candy for people.

Anti-feeding ordinances help raise public awareness and may limit casual feeding. Often, people who care about the animals respond more positively to explanations of

the potential harm feeding can cause geese than to negative messages about the birds or the threat of fines.

Complementary component: Tolerance zone

Site aversion more easily convinces geese to leave when attractive alternative sites are available. Identify and set aside areas where people will tolerate geese and leave them undisturbed.

Complementary component: Public education

Understanding geese can help foster greater tolerance, and public education allows the people affected to play an active role in making decisions. Successful programs incorporate early, open and ongoing communication between managers and the public they serve.

What doesn't work

Some communities place swans on ponds under the theory that they will keep wild waterfowl, including geese, away from their territory. They don't! And sometimes they become nuisances themselves.

Many simple devices are sold to frighten geese (e.g., balloons, scarecrows, coyote decoys, flags, etc.), and they might work temporarily. Indeed, nearly anything new will likely frighten geese temporarily, but geese are smart enough to quickly realize when something doesn't pose a real threat.



Gather information

Whether you're trying to stop a proposed roundup or proactively encourage the adoption of a humane management plan, asking some key questions of your community leaders will help you develop your strategy.

KEY QUESTIONS:

- Where are the geese causing an issue? Are the conflicts located in public spaces and/or on private property? What resources attract the birds to that location?
- What are the complaints about, specifically (e.g., there are too many geese, geese droppings, aggressive geese, etc.)? How many complaints have there been and from whom?
- What actions have been taken so far to address the situation? Have they tried addling? (And if so, where and for how long?) Have they used aversive conditioning? (If so, what techniques, where, and for how long?)
- Has anyone been feeding the geese? Are there any local ordinances or laws prohibiting the feeding of geese?
- Does the relevant county, city or homeowners association (HOA) have an existing geese policy? Have any nearby counties, cities or HOAs adopted a successful humane goose management plan that you can point to?



Take action

Having learned about the issue and gathered information, you're ready to take action. This section is divided into actions you can take to engage your local officials, your community and the media, as well as those you can take to influence policy. Be sure to see the Helpful Tools section on page 13 for sample language and materials, making taking action that much easier!

ENGAGING LEADERS

Contact your officials

Public officials take constituents' interests seriously; they prioritize responding to constituents over non-constituents. Writing letters, sending emails and making phone calls to your leaders is perhaps the most important step you can take to help geese in your community. Make your voice heard! Be cordial and factual, and stick to two or three key points that the official might most be interested in (i.e., Canada goose roundups are inhumane, ineffective and unnecessary). See a sample letter to officials on page 13.

Request a meeting with your officials

Politely request to meet with your officials (see page 14 for sample language). You can attend the meeting by yourself or invite other constituents (e.g., your friends, family, neighbors) to participate. Plan for the meeting to last about 15 minutes (be sure to be on time!) and be aware that you might meet with a staffer rather than your elected official. Call or email to confirm the meeting two or three days before the scheduled meeting time.

Prepare your materials:

- Bring a concise fact sheet that highlights the problems with roundups and the benefits of adopting a humane Canada goose management plan (see the example fact sheet at the end of this toolkit).

Helpful tips for your meeting:

- Before any meeting with an official, research the person you'll be meeting with as much as

you can, develop an agenda and prepare a packet of materials to leave with the official.

- Dress professionally, be cordial and listen to and address their concerns. Practice your presentation ahead of time. If you do not know the answer to a question, tell the official you will find out and get back to them. Do not be discouraged if the official agrees with only a portion of your proposal. Compromise is often necessary in advocacy. Be candid about which entities will likely be in opposition.

Follow up:

- Promptly follow up on your meeting by sending a letter or email thanking the official for their time, briefly restating your position, and responding to any unanswered questions that came up during the meeting.

Testify at a town hall meeting

Perhaps the most important action you can take is to attend a town hall meeting where your local elected official(s) will be present. These meetings typically offer a chance to present public comment or ask questions, but it is important that only those involved (e.g., residents) do so as officials don't always respond well to "outsiders." This is an ideal opportunity to discuss why a humane Canada goose management plan is a good alternative to a cull and to put the issue right before the decision-makers for a comment.

At commission or council meetings, oral testimony typically has a three-minute time limit, so keep your remarks brief and concise (see sample testimony on page 15). Consider coordinating with other advocates to ensure that you don't duplicate each other's testimony and instead each focus on a specific topic. For example, one person can talk about the problems with Canada goose roundups, and another can briefly explain the different ways to manage geese humanely (i.e., site aversion, habitat modification and curtailing reproduction). Having all residents who support humane goose management—the coalition you've worked so hard to build!—wear the same color shirt, or

even a button, helps make the weight of your collective voice clear to officials.

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

Build a coalition

Getting your community to voice opposition to a roundup takes significant effort. It requires reaching out to officials and engaging others in your community. Even in big cities, it can be common for very few people to get involved in local issues—which means a small group of people often changes policies. Getting active support from diverse community groups can make or break the adoption of a humane Canada goose geese management plan and/or the stopping of a roundup. Let the public know about your efforts and secure letters of support, along with commitments to meet with their elected officials, attend and/or testify at hearings, and provide outreach to other community residents.

Spread the word on social media

Engage your local network on social media, asking only those directly involved (i.e., constituents) to contact their officials to voice their opinion. Inform them of scheduled community meetings and ask them to get involved by submitting op-eds or letters to the editor, and by contacting their elected officials. Social media is a great way to find like-minded individuals who will help you in your mission! Our toolkit includes a sample share graphic, tweets and Facebook posts (see page 16). You may also find it helpful to create a Facebook group of like-minded neighbors. You can use it to advocate for geese now, and you can reach back out again in the future if other animal welfare issues come up..

Organize a public education event in your community

If you have a strong grasp of the issue and how it affects your community, consider hosting a public event to educate fellow citizens about solutions to and preventing conflicts with Canada geese. You can encourage attendees to take action to stop lethal management and to support a humane management plan. (See page 14 for a fact sheet you can use at these events). You'll want to invite key stakeholders to co-host, speak at or attend the event.

Prepare for opposition

While every community is different, the odds are that someone in your area will support killing geese and oppose the adoption of a humane Canada goose management plan. Be sure to prepare sympathetic officials with information about the opponent's concerns and the data, facts and talking points to address them (see the fact sheet at the end of this toolkit for helpful material).



ENGAGING THE MEDIA

Submit a letter to the editor of your local paper

Letters to the editor are an important tool for influencing public opinion, as they are typically the most widely read section of the newspaper. Lawmakers frequently read the opinion section to gauge the interest of their constituents on a variety of matters. The more letters submitted to the same publication that express similar viewpoints, the greater the likelihood that one or more letters will be published, so encourage others to write as well. It can also help shape news coverage if editors recognize this as an issue that's important to readers.

The average letter to the editor is only about five or six sentences—keep it short and direct. Some papers list their word count limit in the letters section. State your main point (i.e., Canada goose roundups are inhumane, ineffective and unnecessary) clearly in the beginning of

the letter to grab the reader’s attention. Don’t forget to include an “ask” (i.e., the action you want readers to take after reading your letter). Timing is also important, so submit your letter before a goose cull or vote on the adoption of a humane management plan is scheduled to occur. This toolkit contains a few examples of letters to the editor that you can adapt for your needs (see page 17).

Submit an opinion piece to your local paper

Opinion editorial pieces (commonly known as “op-eds”) are similar to letters to the editor, but they are longer and provide more context regarding a particular issue. While letters to the editor may be around 250 words or fewer, op-eds may be 500 to 800 words. Media outlets are more likely to publish op-eds written by individuals who have authority on a particular issue or are seen as a leader in their community. Outline your stake in the issue: Are you a veterinarian, wildlife rehabilitator, animal shelter/rescue worker or volunteer, scientist, member of academia, hunter, hiker, wildlife watcher, or parent, school or community association concerned with animal welfare or public safety? Say so! State your main point (i.e., Canada goose roundups are inhumane, ineffective and unnecessary) clearly in the beginning of the op-ed to grab the reader’s attention. Don’t forget to include an “ask” (i.e., the action you want readers to take after reading your op-ed). Timing is also important, so submit your op-ed before a goose cull or vote on the adoption of a humane management plan is scheduled to occur. See page 18 for a sample op-ed.

Use the media to influence public opinion

After you submit letters to the editor and opinion pieces (“op-eds”), request to meet with the newspaper’s editorial board to encourage them to weigh in supporting your position. Cultivate a relationship with local reporters and keep them updated on developments.

INFLUENCE POLICY

Here are actions you can take to encourage the adoption of a humane Canada goose management plan and feeding ban.

Learn the process

The process for adopting local policies varies around the country and among HOAs, so take the time to become familiar with how things work in your community. Another member of your HOA or an official or employee in your local government may be able to help you. Attend a few meetings of the governing body you hope to influence. Listen to the kinds of questions they ask and the issues they take most seriously. By understanding their general concerns, you will be able to craft persuasive and targeted arguments.

Find a friend in office

Public officials tend to take constituents’ interests seriously, so try talking to your own councilmember, county commissioner, alderman or HOA board of directors first. As much as we would like the people we elect to agree with us, this may not always be the case. If your own official is not interested, do not despair. Try to find other official(s) with an interest in animal issues and pitch your idea to them. Often, your local animal control bureau or nonprofit humane society can point you toward a sympathetic decision-maker.

Provide sample policy

Providing a sample policy that your community leaders can adopt makes it easier for them to do so. Our Canada goose management and information guide (available at humanesociety.org/geese) can serve as a resource. GeesePeace™—an organization dedicated to building better communities through innovative, effective and humane solutions to wildlife conflicts—has developed an effective template that communities can adopt. Visit geesepeace.com for more information.

You can also encourage your officials to adopt a goose feeding ban like the one found on page 19.

Lobby elected officials

If a public hearing has been scheduled regarding your proposal, make every effort to ensure that you have the votes you need for it to pass. Ensure that you have met with every official, provided your information packets and responded to their concerns. Don’t be afraid to ask whether you have their vote. Encourage as many residents as possible to write to and call their officials. Reach out to your coalition partners to help publicize

the issue and issue a call to action through alerts and letters. The key is to convince a majority of the officials to vote in your favor.

Public hearing

Once your elected officials call a public meeting to discuss your proposal, you will need to determine who will testify at the hearing and get others to attend. Work closely with your supportive officials on how best to present your case to other officials. They may recommend limiting the number of speakers.

Plan ahead of time to make sure that everyone does not speak on the exact same points (a common problem at public hearings). You most likely will have very limited time (probably only three to five minutes per person), so dividing talking points among a handful of speakers can ensure that all of your key arguments are heard. It is especially influential if you can get those who will be enforcing the humane management plan to testify in support. Professionals in uniform add an additional air of importance and mainstream acceptance to an issue.

Also, it is a good idea to make sure the elected officials can readily identify supporters of your proposal. Create stickers, buttons or matching T-shirts with a relevant message (e.g., “[city] citizens for humane Canada goose management”).

Follow up after the hearing

The issue might not come to a vote during the hearing. While you’re there, take careful notes about who speaks in opposition, what their arguments are and how the officials respond to them. Also note what questions the officials ask. This will help you provide information to officials following the hearing to help alleviate any specific concerns. Check in with sympathetic officials to debrief about the public hearing and decide what steps to take next.

After the vote

If a vote is taken and you win, celebrate! If you lose, take all that you have learned during the campaign and put it to good use when you try again. It can often take several attempts before a community adopts a humane management plan, so do not be discouraged if your first effort fails. Talk to the officials who opposed the adoption of the plan and discuss what changes could be made to garner their support in the future. Remember that regardless of the outcome, you educated many people with your message. Public education is critical to the success of any animal welfare campaign and, over time, an educated public can push for positive changes for animals.



Sample letters to officials

LETTER IN SUPPORT OF A HUMANE CANADA GOOSE MANAGEMENT PLAN

[DATE]
[OFFICIAL'S ADDRESS]

Dear [OFFICIAL],

As a resident of [city], I was disturbed to learn that a Canada goose roundup has been proposed. I, and many other citizens and community leaders, ask that the killing be cancelled.

Roundups and killing programs are ineffective for solving conflicts with Canada geese, as attractive habitat in the parks will simply be repopulated by additional Canada geese once the molt is over and geese can fly once again.

I urge [city] to adopt a comprehensive and humane program for managing conflicts with geese, rather than resorting to lethal methods. The best programs are those which combine egg addling, habitat modification, anti-feeding messaging and aversive conditioning to keep geese away from the areas in which they are causing problems. These solutions are not only more humane than roundups and killing programs, but they're also more effective.

In the interest of creating a more humane society, I urge you to adopt a humane Canada goose management plan. Your support will send a powerful message that [city] cares about the responsible management of our state's natural resources. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

[NAME]
[ADDRESS & CONTACT INFORMATION]

LETTER IN OPPOSITION TO ROUNDUP

[DATE]
[OFFICIAL'S ADDRESS]

Dear [OFFICIAL],

As a member of [HOA], I am writing to voice my opposition to the proposed geese roundup and killing program.

Geese roundups are inhumane, ineffective and unnecessary. The geese are herded into a pen, then stuffed into small chambers on the back of a truck and gassed to death. I do not want my dues to be spent on such cruelty, nor do many of the members of this HOA.

Also, such roundups do not work to solve conflicts with geese, as attractive habitat will simply be repopulated by additional Canada geese.

As an alternative, I urge the Board to adopt a humane Canada goose management plan that combines non-lethal techniques such as egg addling, habitat modification, anti-feeding messaging and aversive conditioning to keep geese away from the areas in which they are causing problems. I've attached some resources to this letter, including a template management plan and information guide.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

[NAME]
[ADDRESS & CONTACT INFORMATION]

Sample request for meeting

LETTER OR EMAIL REQUESTING TO MEET

[DATE]

[COMMUNITY LEADER ADDRESS]

Dear [COMMUNITY LEADER],

My name is [your name]. I am a constituent and would like to schedule a meeting with you or an appropriate staff person to discuss a humane option for managing the conflicts with Canada geese in our community. Would you be available on any of the following dates [list dates]?

[If others are attending] I expect several other constituents to attend the meeting and will forward their names prior to the meeting date.

I have attached a copy of a template Canada goose management plan I will be proposing and will bring a copy to our meeting.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[ADDRESS & CONTACT INFORMATION]



Sample testimony

My name is [name] and I've been a member of [name] Homeowners Association for [number] years. What has traditionally been a warm, welcoming community has since become a divisive one over the subject of geese.

I'd like to urge [name] HOA to adopt a comprehensive and humane program for managing conflicts with geese, rather than resorting to lethal methods. Roundups and killing programs are ineffective for solving conflicts with Canada geese, as attractive habitat in the parks will simply be repopulated by additional Canada geese once the molt is over and geese can fly once again.

A better alternative is a program that combines egg addling, habitat modification, anti-feeding messaging and aversive conditioning to keep geese away from the areas in which they are causing problems.. These solutions are not only more humane than roundups and killing programs, but they are also more effective and typically less expensive. As a dues-paying member of [name] HOA, I want my money to go toward a program that works!

A ready-to-adopt humane Canada goose management plan exists, developed by the Humane Society of the United States. The HSUS is ready and willing to help us implement the plan in our community.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to address you about this important issue.



Sample social media items

SAMPLE FACEBOOK POSTS

Facebook can be a great way to mobilize your coalition to take action. But remember, community leaders only want to hear from those in their community, not “outsiders,” so be sure to target your post to those directly involved in the issue—and ask others to do the same!

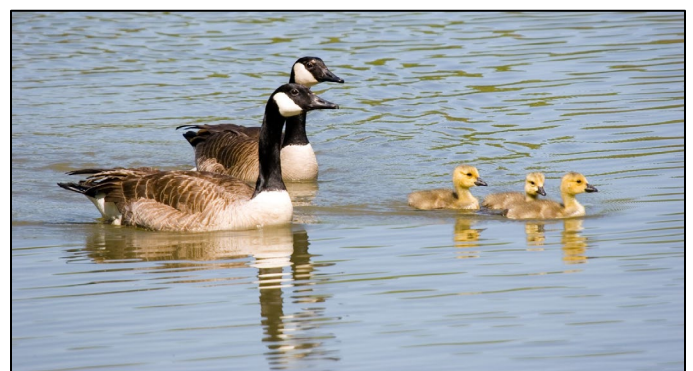
1. [City] has proposed a roundup and killing of geese on [date]. Killing geese doesn't work! Other geese will simply fill the void. It's a waste of time and resources! Please join me in urging Mayor [Name] to cancel the geese cull taking place on [date]. If you are a resident of [city], call [phone number] to voice your opinion. Please only call if you are a resident!
2. Coexisting with geese is possible! An effective, humane Canada goose management plan exists and has been implemented in communities across the country. Urge your local officials (find out who represents you at the link below) to adopt humane conflict resolution strategies.
3. Canada goose roundups are inhumane —most involve killing geese by lethal gas in small chambers on the back of a truck. Write a letter to the editor of your local paper to voice your opposition to these cruel roundups and support for a humane Canada goose management plan.
4. Attention all members of [HOA]! A meeting has been scheduled for [date and time] to vote on a proposed Canada goose roundup. Come voice your support for a humane alternative!

SAMPLE TWEETS

Tweets have a certain character limit and can include a photo, video, GIF and even a poll. Incorporate the use of a hashtag (#) in your postings. Be mindful that using too many hashtags can clutter a post and make it more difficult to read. Retweeting other tweets is also a great idea!

1. Killing geese is not the answer. Peaceful coexistence is possible! Say “no” to the @city goose roundup. #noto[city]geeseroundup #supportcoexistence
2. @Mayor, please cancel the Canada goose roundup in @city. Roundups are inhumane and ineffective. A humane alternative is available! #noto[city]geeseroundup #supportcoexistence
3. @City needs a sustainable, humane Canada goose management plan, not a temporary fix. @official, vote yes to support coexistence! #supportcoexistence

SAMPLE GRAPHIC TO GO ALONG WITH SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



Speak up for geese!

The city of Springfield is planning to round-up and kill geese in response to complaints from residents. Contact our city leaders now to urge them to cancel this killing program and to use humane solutions for solving conflicts with geese instead!

Photo Credit: rxx3rxx3@iStock.com



Sample letter to the editor

This sample can be used for inspiration, but do not copy and submit it verbatim—newspapers prefer to print unique submissions.

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR: THE PROBLEM WITH GEESE ROUNDUPS

As a resident of [city], I was disturbed to learn that a goose roundup has been proposed. I, and many other citizens and community leaders, ask that the roundup be cancelled.

Roundups are inhumane, ineffective and unnecessary. Geese are typically rounded-up during June through July, when they are molting and cannot fly. Wildlife agents herd the defenseless creatures into pens. The geese are then either shipped in crates to slaughterhouses or killed by lethal gas in small chambers on the back of trucks. They can be heard banging and thumping as they try to escape.

How can we be so cruel, especially when humane, effective alternatives are available? Communities around the country, including [nearby community], have adopted a humane Canada goose management plan with great success. What are we waiting for?

Let's focus on solving conflicts with geese, not on reducing their numbers. [City] should adopt an effective and humane long-term Canada goose management plan. There will always be geese. We must learn to coexist!

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR: IN SUPPORT OF A HUMANE GEESE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Can we blame geese for loving [community]? We've created ideal habitat for them! [Name] golf course and [name] city park offer a grass buffet, as well as the open sight lines and water geese need to protect themselves from predators. They love this place that we, too, call home!

But where there are geese, there are droppings. I'll admit they can be frustrating, but not more than that: There is no scientific evidence that geese droppings are a threat to public health. But is it okay to kill geese because they poop?

On [date], a goose roundup is scheduled in [city]. As a resident of [city], I (and many other citizens and community leaders) ask that this roundup be cancelled. Roundups are inhumane and they don't solve the problem. Any geese removed will simply be replaced by other geese. (Remember that prime real estate I mentioned?)

Luckily, there is an alternative to killing geese: a humane Canada goose management plan. Such a plan combines techniques—aversive conditioning with specially trained dogs or lasers, egg addling, habitat modification and anti-feeding programs—to help reduce conflicts with geese. Several communities around the country, including [local community], have adopted humane Canada goose management plans with great success. It's time for us to join them!

There will always be geese. We must learn to coexist!



Sample opinion piece (op-ed)

This sample can be used for inspiration, but do not copy and submit it verbatim—newspapers prefer to print unique submissions.

SAMPLE OP-ED

The roundup and gassing to death of [number] Canada geese and goslings in [location] last week was not just inhumane and against the wishes of many [location] residents, but it was also a complete waste of taxpayer dollars.

This time of year, Canada geese lose all their flight feathers and cannot fly, making them easy to round up in crates and transport to their death. However, as soon as the molt season ends in a few weeks, Canada geese from nearby areas will discover the lush grasses that [location] has to offer and will fill the parks once again.

Treating eggs with corn oil (addling) is an inexpensive, humane and easy way to control the population growth rate of Canada geese populations. If [location] staff had addled the eggs in our park, they would not only have reduced the number of geese in the park over time, but they would have also been able to humanely harass geese away from the parks with methods such as lasers and specially trained dogs. Instead, they allowed goslings to hatch, only to kill them a few short weeks later.

Modifying the park habitat to make it less attractive to geese and curbing the feeding of geese by the public would also go a long way toward solving conflicts with geese in [location]. There will always be geese. We must learn to coexist!



Example ordinance

Below is an example of an ordinance, in this case one adopted by the city of Sterling, Illinois.

ORDINANCE NO. _____

ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 14 (ANIMALS) TO ADD A NEW SECTION 14-13 PROHIBITING THE FEEDING OF WILD ANIMALS WITHIN THE CITY LIMITS OF STERLING AND ADDING A NEW SECTION 14-14 PROVIDING FOR RULES APPLICABLE TO THE FEEDING OF CATS

WHEREAS, the Illinois Municipal Code, 65 ILCS 5/11-20-5, authorizes any municipality to enable all acts or make all regulations which are necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community; and

WHEREAS, the Illinois Municipal Code, 65 ILCS 5/11-60-2, authorizes any municipality to define, prevent, and abate nuisances; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and City Council of the City of Sterling (the “City”) deem it advisable, necessary, and in the public interest that a prohibition on feeding wild animals, other than feral cats, within the municipal boundaries is required to prevent the attraction of wild animals unnaturally to the municipality, causing a public nuisance; and

WHEREAS, the increased influx of wild animals into the municipality increases the potential for damage to public parks and private property as well as elevating the potential for the spread of diseases found through contact with the wild animals, wild animal’s feces, and the unsanitary and unsafe conditions created by the presence of wild animals; and

WHEREAS, the City has been receiving complaints concerning citizens feeding wild animals, other than feral cats, within the municipality’s limits, leading to safety and health concerns; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the provisions in the Illinois Municipal Code, it is necessary that the City adopt an ordinance prohibiting the feeding of wild animals and establishing penalties for the violation thereof.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED, by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Sterling, Whiteside County, Illinois as follows:

SECTION 1: The recitals as set forth in the preambles of this Ordinance, are true and correct and are hereby incorporated herein as if fully set forth in this Section 1.

SECTION 2: That Chapter 14 be amended to add a new Section 14-13 entitled Wild Animals which shall read as follows:

14-13 Wild Animals

A. **Definitions.** Wild animal is defined as any feral dog, raccoon, skunk, opossum, coyote, deer, fox, squirrel, wild turkey, ducks, geese, and any other animal that is deemed a nondomesticated animal according to Section 14-3 of this Chapter.

B. **Nuisance Feeding Prohibited.** The feeding of any wild animal by any means, including hand feeding or the placing or setting of food to be left attended or unattended outside of appropriate waste containers and in such a manner as to harbor or attract wild animals, which creates or has the potential to create a hazard to public health or safety is hereby declared to be a public nuisance and to be unlawful.

C. **Presumption.** If any person places or sets out food that is, in fact, consumed by a wild animal, that person shall be presumed to have fed a wild animal. This provision shall not apply to persons setting out refuse or garbage for collection in conformance with the City Code, or to persons growing crops or gardens in conformance with the city ordinance, or to the baiting

of traps.

D. Exceptions. Exceptions to this Section include:

(1) Above ground bird feeders and squirrel feeders, no more than four (4) per lot, that are designed for the specific purpose of feeding birds and squirrels. Above ground feeders shall be a minimum of four (4') feet off the ground. Feeders must be designed to minimize any nuisances, including but not limited to excessive spillage of feed. All feeders shall be located at least five (5') feet within property lines.

(2) The incidental, sporadic, or infrequent feeding of wild animals (e.g. attaching an ear of corn to a squirrel feeder)

E. Penalty. In addition to all other remedies, any person who violates, disobeys, omits, neglects or refuses to comply with any provision of this section shall be subject to a penalty of \$150.00 for each offense.

SECTION 3: That Chapter 14 be amended to add a new Section 14-14 entitled Feeding of Cats which shall read as follows:

14-14. Feeding of Cats.

A. Rules applicable to cats, excluding managed community cats covered in subsection B below, are as follows:

(1) The feeding of cats outdoors shall take place primarily during daylight hours to minimize the risk of domestic-wildlife interactions that have increased potential of rabies exposure for cats. Any food provided after daylight hours shall only be provided for such time required for feeding, and no longer than 30 minutes, after which it shall be removed.

(2) Feeding outdoors is only allowed when an appropriate amount of food for daily consumption of the cat being cared for is provided. Food must be appropriately placed in a sanitary container sufficient for the cat being fed. Automatic feeders that are properly maintained and secured may be used to dispense daily food rations and may be present during night hours.

(3) Dumping excess quantities of food on the ground, placing excess quantities in bowls or other containers, and leaving open food packages is prohibited.

(4) Feeding outdoors must take place on the property owned by the person placing the food or be done with the consent of the property owner. Feeding on public property, road right-of-ways, parks, common land of a multifamily housing unit or any property without consent of the owner is prohibited.

B. Community Cat Management Initiatives: The City of Sterling recognizes the need for innovation in addressing the issues presented by feral, free-roaming and other community cats. To that end it recognizes that there are community care givers of cats, and acknowledges that properly managed community cats may be part of the solution to the continuing euthanasia of cats; and establishes the following requirements:

(1) All managed community cat groups must be maintained on private property of the caregiver, or with permission on the private property of another landowner (including city, state, and federal public property).

(2) All cats that are part of community cat management programs (TNR) must be sterilized, vaccinated against the threat of rabies, and ear-tipped for easy identification; if these requirements are met the community cat is exempt from licensing, stray, at-large and

possibly other provisions of this ordinance that apply to owned animals.

(3) If a person is providing care for the community cats, he or she is required to provide certain necessities on a regular/ongoing basis, including, but not limited to, proper nutrition and medical care as needed. If medical care is unavailable or too expensive, the caregiver must not allow the cat to suffer.

(i) Food must be provided in the proper quantity for the number of cats being managed and is to be supplied no less than once per day. Food must be maintained in proper feeding containers.

(ii) Water, if supplied, must be clean, potable and free from debris and algae.

(iii) If shelter is provided, it shall be unobtrusive, safe, and of the proper size for the cat(s).

SECTION 4: In all other respects, Chapter 14 shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 5: The additions to Chapter 14 shall be deemed to be separable and the invalidity of any portion of the Ordinance shall not effect the remainder.

SECTION 6: All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict herewith are, to the extent of such conflict, hereby repealed.

SECTION 7: The City Clerk is directed to publish this ordinance in pamphlet form.

SECTION 8: This Ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage, publication, and approval as provided by law.

Approved this ____ day of _____, 2019.



Why killing geese isn't the answer

When Canada geese are deemed a nuisance or threat, they are often rounded up and killed—a process that is inhumane, ineffective and unnecessary.

Rounding up and killing geese is:

INHUMANE

Most roundups occur during the birds' annual molt (from mid-June through July), when they are growing new feathers and can't fly, making them easy targets. Roundups often include large numbers of young birds who haven't yet developed the ability to fly. During a roundup, wildlife agents set up portable pens and herd Canada geese inside, separating the adults from their goslings. Next, the geese are typically packed in crates before being killed by carbon dioxide gas (a painful and distressing death), often in small chambers on the back of trucks brought directly to the roundup site.

In other cases, the geese are trucked to slaughterhouses to be killed and processed. Because meat from federally protected birds cannot be sold, it may be offered to food banks to create the impression that the killing was a charitable act. However, goose meat is often contaminated with lead, pesticides and other toxicants, making it unsuitable for human consumption. Food banks often reject these donations of goose meat.

INEFFECTIVE

Roundups and killings do not solve conflicts with Canada geese. While they may clear a specific area of Canada geese for a short time, roundups free up prime real estate for more geese to move into as soon as the annual molt ends. The best way to solve conflicts with Canada geese is with a multi-pronged plan that humanely reduces the goose population and changes the habitat so it is less attractive to geese.

UNNECESSARY

Humane programs have been successfully resolving conflicts with Canada geese in many communities for many years. These programs use a combination of techniques to curtail reproduction and to keep geese away from areas where they're causing problems.



Components of a humane goose management plan

Effective goose management programs typically follow a seasonal timeline. They're most effective when they combine at least two or three of the following key components:

CURTAILING REPRODUCTION

Canada geese are often philopatric—when sexually mature, they return to the nest where they hatched. So, curtailing reproduction can lead to fewer geese nesting at a given site in the future. The most immediate benefit from curtailing reproduction is that adult geese can be readily convinced to leave because they're not rearing flightless goslings.

“Addling” refers to any process by which an egg ceases to be viable. Eggs can be humanely addled by oiling, removing them from the nest, or replacing them with dummy eggs. A contraceptive—nicarbazin sold under the brand name OvoControl—is also registered to reduce hatching and manage populations humanely. Please see our *Canada Goose Egg Addling Manual* (humanesociety.org)

geese) for detailed information about how to addle.

SITE AVERSION

Site aversion—harassing or scaring geese away so they learn a site is not a safe place—is an effective technique for solving conflicts with geese when used in conjunction with an egg addling program. Site aversion efforts are most effective before nesting season in the spring and after geese regain their flight feathers in the summer.

The most effective way to scare geese away is with specially trained goose-herding dogs. These dogs work with a handler to convince geese they are not safe from predators in certain areas.

Lasers and other light-emitting devices specifically designed to scare birds are useful at dusk as geese settle down for the night. Scaring birds away from night roosts means they will start their day elsewhere.

Another option is to use chemical repellents. These chemicals can be dispersed as a fog or sprayed on grass to keep geese away from high-priority areas.

HABITAT MODIFICATION

The best way to avoid long-term Canada goose problems (and often the most cost-effective in the long run) is to change the habitat so it doesn't appeal to them. Geese feel safe from predators where there are open sight lines, so they can see predators coming, and where they can easily escape onto open water. To make an area less attractive to geese, use dense, tall plantings or stands of trees along shorelines to make a barrier between food and water, and locate ball fields and other grassy expanses as far from open water as possible. Reduce the total amount of lawn and reduce the young grass shoots geese like the most. Replace Kentucky bluegrass (i.e., “goose candy”) with other grasses, such as tall fescue.

COMPLEMENTARY COMPONENTS

Stop feeding: Do not feed geese! Human food is not healthy for them and geese will gather where they are fed. Even the best site aversion techniques will fail in areas where people feed geese.

Tolerance zone: Habitat changes work better if geese can go to a “tolerance zone” that meets their needs. Leave tolerance zones—and the geese in them—alone. Then geese will vacate zero-tolerance zones more readily.

Public education: Understanding geese can help foster greater tolerance, and public education allows people to play an active role in decisions. Successful programs incorporate early, open and ongoing communication between managers and the public they serve.

Find more information at humanesociety.org/geese.



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

Our Promise

We fight the big fights to end suffering for all animals.

Together with millions of supporters, we take on puppy mills, factory farms, trophy hunts, animal testing and other cruel industries. With our affiliates, we rescue and care for thousands of animals every year through our animal rescue team's work and other hands-on animal care services.

We fight all forms of animal cruelty to achieve the vision behind our name: a humane society.
And we can't do it without you.



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

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