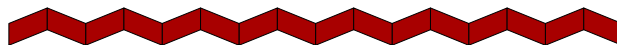




CANADA GEESE



Safety & Security Fact Sheet

✓ **WHAT ARE CANADA GEESE?**

Historically, Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*) migrated through the eastern United States from breeding grounds in Canada to wintering habitats in the southern states. These migratory waterfowl are protected from harm by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. The Canada geese that do not migrate, but instead remain in Virginia year-round, are referred to as “local breeding” or “resident” Canada geese. Since these are no longer migratory birds, and have become a nuisance on playgrounds and golf courses, some would argue that they no longer deserve regulatory protection. Nevertheless, they remain on the protected species list, and it continues to be a punishable offense to harm them except under the conditions of a permit issued by the regulatory authority. Harmless harassment, however, is not prohibited.

✓ **WHAT CAN BE DONE TO CHASE AWAY RESIDENT CANADA GEESE OR TO DISCOURAGE THEIR GRAZING OR NESTING?**

The Canada geese have so completely adapted to their new sedentary existence that they have learned to ignore the various means employed to shoo them away. Apparently, these geese will barely ruffle a feather at the sound of gunshots or cannon fire or when scarecrows, flags, or other frightening devices are displayed in their view. Not even boisterous children playing will chase them away. Barriers and other exclusion methods such as fencing, hedgerows, or wire grids are effective in preventing their landing and grazing, but these methods are not consistent with school property use.

✓ **WHAT ABOUT TRAPPING AND REMOVING THE GEESE TO ANOTHER LOCATION?**

Trapping and transporting is not cost-effective. A cooperative cost-share capture and removal program is provided by federal and state agencies. However, captured Canada geese are not relocated to alleviate damage or conflicts with humans because Canada geese cause damage or conflicts statewide. Federal and state agencies understandably do not wish to transfer the nuisance from one locality to another. *Instead, captured Canada geese are processed by a meat processor and donated to food banks to feed people in need.* Public opinion would not likely tolerate this method of control.

✓ **WHY CAN'T DOGS BE USED TO CHASE THE GEESE AWAY?**

Allowing dogs to run loose on school property would be in violation of the Fairfax County leash law, though the use of free-ranging dogs trained to chase birds soon after landing has been demonstrated to be an effective control measure. The use of slip wires to control the dogs will restrict their movement, allowing the geese to simply move beyond their reach.

✓ **OK! SO, WE'RE NOT GOING TO GET RID OF THEM. WHAT CAN BE DONE TO MINIMIZE THE ADVERSE EFFECT OF GEESE ON SCHOOL PLAYGROUNDS?**

- Discourage the feeding of geese on school property by posting signs saying **Keep “wild” in wildlife. Feeding ducks and geese is prohibited.** Posting reminders in school publications may also be helpful.
- Inspect the playground for fresh droppings immediately before use to determine where the geese have been most recently grazing. Fresh droppings are green and squishy; day-old or older droppings are brown, dried, and not as messy.
- Instruct the children to avoid the playground areas where fresh droppings may be present.
- Use a garden hose to rinse droppings from walkways near building exits before children are allowed to go outdoors.
- Place walk-off mats inside the doors to be entered from the playground. Instruct children to wipe the bottoms of their shoes carefully and have teachers check the bottoms of the children's shoes as they step from the walk-off mat.
- Instruct children to wash their hands carefully after playing on the playground.

If you need assistance, call the safety section at 571-423-2010.