

Controlling Nuisance Birds in Dairy Facilities



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- Birds congregating in large numbers, i.e. starlings, are a nuisance on farms. Their dropping not only make a mess, but also can contain *E. coli* or Salmonella, which may or may not result in disease in cattle. A direct link between bird droppings and these particular diseases has not been solidly established.
- Birds tend to roost overnight in a different area than those in which they feed. Both behaviors can cause issues on farms.
- Birds consume only concentrates or grain and eat approximately 50% of their body weight daily. Assuming that a starling eats approximately 80% of its feed from the feedbunk or an open silo, a starling can eat 0.0625 pounds of feed daily (Mike Brouk). The problem is, most dairies don't have a bird or two causing a nuisance, they generally number in the thousands. A group or flock of 10,000 starlings could potentially consume 500 lbs feed daily. Not only is this an additional cost to a dairy resulting from the lost feed, the resulting feed consumed by cattle does not contain the mixture of ingredients intended and balanced for the cows.
- In the fall and winter, birds can become a nuisance when they prefer to roost overnight in barns leaving behind bird droppings everywhere and on the cows themselves. Unfortunately, limited effective options exist to disrupt their roosting behavior. Loud noises or plastic owls are minimally effective and often times the birds become accustomed to the noise or fake owl and continue to roost in barns. To be somewhat effective, birds must be driven away for 7 to 10 days and not allowed to enter barns. This disruption can potentially scare cows within the barn, not a good cattle management practice. Predatory birds, such as hawks, living in a barn can be effective, but not often used. Toxicants that were available two decades ago are no longer available for use. Exclusion seems to be the most effective, but costly method. The use of netting in areas birds can roost prevents this behavior. Ideally, this exclusion netting should be in place prior to birds attempting to roost in barns

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