

# Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program Fact Sheet



The Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program (WCDPP) helps reduce the amount and severity of damage and economic losses caused by waterfowl to cereal grain crops during the fall harvest season. Delivery of the program is delegated to Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) by Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (AEPA). The WCDPP provides waterfowl scaring advice to producers with waterfowl crop damage problems and provides scaring equipment to participating Counties and Municipal District Agricultural Service Boards to be used in their equipment lending programs.

Early action is the key to reduce the amount and severity of waterfowl crop damage. Watch your crops closely in the harvest season and act as soon as waterfowl are observed within crops. Waterfowl are much easier to scare from crops before a feeding pattern becomes established. **The WCDPP recommends the following strategies to assist you with the prevention and reduction of waterfowl crop damage:**

## 1. Waterfowl Hunters

Invite hunters to harvest waterfowl on your fields as they can be very effective in preventing crop losses. Encourage hunts over multiple days to ensure waterfowl get the message! On occasion, ACA can put producers who wish to use hunters as a method of damage control in touch with willing waterfowl hunters. Please call the toll-free number 1-877-969-9091 or email [info@ab-conservation.com](mailto:info@ab-conservation.com) for more information. When hunters leave, a producer should continue to use scarecrows and scare cannons to minimize damage.

## 2. Scare Cannons

Scare cannons are effective in getting waterfowl to leave the field, especially if used in conjunction with scarecrows and/or hunters. Propane powered scare cannons emit loud explosions (120 db), similar to a shotgun blast. Waterfowl are less likely to become accustomed to the noise if you move the scare cannons within the field and vary the frequency of explosions.

## 3. Scarecrows

If waterfowl are an annual problem in your field, put scarecrows up as soon as the crop is swathed and use them in conjunction with scare cannons and waterfowl hunters to protect crops. Scarecrows do not have to be elaborate. A garbage bag attached to a post so that it moves in the wind works well.

## 4. Vegetation Buffers

Where possible, incorporate a buffer of tree, shrub, and grass cover around waterbodies. Waterfowl prefer any easy path towards water to flee from threats. Tall vegetation can break their line of sight and possibly prevent crop predation when paired with other preventive measures.

## 5. Providing waterfowl alternative feeding sites

Producers may choose to have waterfowl feed undisturbed on their harvested fields. Field peas are a waterfowl favourite and are usually harvested earlier than other cereal crops - often before the main migration gets underway. After the crop is combined and removed from the field, the remaining pea stubble and waste peas will attract and hold waterfowl, keeping them out of your unharvested crops. Field pea stubble is especially effective for holding Canada geese. Stubble from barley, wheat and oats can also serve as alternate feeding sites for waterfowl. *Fall tillage should be postponed until harvest activities are finished.*

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