

Improve Bird Control in Berry Crops

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Compared to weeds, fungi, and insects, birds are intelligent. They learn. This means that you can improve your success in managing bird problems by incorporating change and variability in the techniques you use. The only real exception to this is if you use a total exclusion method, like netting.

Recognizing the bird species that cause problems will help, too. In particular, recognize if they are flocking species, or species that occur in resident pairs/families. Flocking species (in general) are easier to scare off than resident pairs/families.

Scare techniques include visual devices (flashing things, hanging dead crow (very effective on crows, ravens), effigies & silhouettes, raptor-like kites, and people. Auditory scare devices include banger & screamer pyrotechnics, taped distress calls, propane cannons, and others. I strongly recommend combining devices, and changing them through the season.

For some of you, falconry is an option. Hiring a falconer to exercise his/her birds can be extremely effective, if done when crops are vulnerable. There are even ways to encourage some wild raptors to take up residence on your farm.

Netting is usually the most expensive and most effective technique. Recent changes in netting design and details have made major improvements in the ease of setup & removal. Before embarking on a netting project, remember that netting almost always restricts your access with equipment. Some designs are less restrictive than others. When put up properly, some netting lasts 10 years or longer. That spreads the cost out, and makes it a more attractive option. In my state, I have some growers still using sections of netting that are over 15 years old! Like the foundation of a building, the network of posts and “wires” that support most netting must be carefully built. For those of you with short-term crops that get moved around (strawberries, for example) there are now netting options that are laid directly on the plants

My publication also covers shooting, taste repellents, and habitat modification. If you don't get a copy today, you can download one at http://extension.unh.edu/resources/files/Resource001797_Rep2514.pdf

It has many more details than I'll put here, and also includes a list of suppliers.