

Birds! Birds!

My Barn is just for the BIRDS!

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Typically When & Whom??

- When it first starts getting cold and other food sources are becoming scarce. Typically for us that is about mid-November.
- When the snow comes they head for a SELECTED BARN?? Where they can be kept warm by the cows, safe from predators and fat on the grain in the TMR; all under the watchful eye of the good herd manager.
- Some birds stay only in one barn. Some are commuters- sleeping and defecating in one barn and eating and more defecation in another barn.
- For a few farms it is pigeons. They are more easily controlled with lead as they are fewer and easier to hit.
- THE bigger issues and concerns are the “black birds” be they starlings, red wing black birds or English sparrow, brown-headed cow birds and common grackle. In some areas American crows are an issue. These are all lumped into this group called black birds.

Starlings

- From late November until late February and or early March these birds are the most likely problem bird. They can be in a barn by the 1000s. They are from 6-8 inches long with a short tail and a chunky body with a black-green speckled appearance. These are exotics, like sparrows, zebra mussels, carp, pheasants, Norway rats or purple loosestrife etc.
- As an introduced species with no economic and or sporting value they are not protected either by state or federal laws.

Major Losses Due to Birds

- Livestock infected with disease by birds often show paralysis and or abortion along with other systemic signs.
- Research is being conducted to offer information as to how much feed birds actually do it. What is actually eaten, contaminated and or other issues.

Lets find out what a bird eats

- Starlings will eat up to 50% of its body weight per day.
- Research has shown that 1,000 starlings will eat about 10 lbs. of food in 1 minute.
- This translates into 10 lbs. per 1,000 bird minutes.
- Say 2,000 birds were eating on your farm for 20 minutes. According to the study you could expect about 400 lbs. of feed to be eaten!!
- The birds only eat the grain portion of the TMR, so energy density can be lowered considerably.
- If you fed 100 lbs of as is feed one feeding per day to 200 cows that would be 20000 lbs per day. Let us say that you were feeding each cow 4 lbs. of cottonseed, 12 lbs. of HMSC, 3 lbs. of Roasted beans that would be the right size for the birds. That means that there would be 3800 lbs. of these types of grain in the TMR and with just this one 20 minute feeding the birds could have taken 10.5% of all those grains or 2 lbs per cow.

Bird Feeders Continued!!!

- If your barn is infested with these avian pests you could be experiencing much poorer performance than anticipated due to the grain and energy disappearance.
- But that is only part of the story unfortunately!!
- Bird droppings contain high levels of uric acid which over time can greatly reduce the functional life of buildings and equipment and roofs by 50%
- Bird droppings on the backs of livestock can be absorbed into the body through the skin just like the dust rubber and or pour on type products and methods.
- Birds also are not fussy about where the droppings go so many droppings fall directly onto the feed and or in the water troughs.

Health Issues- Cows & Humans

- More than 20 diseases have been linked as being transmitted by birds to animals.
- The most common symptoms are abortions, infertility, mastitis, decreased milk production and appetite loss or lowered intakes.
- Farm owners are also concerned for their health, the health of their families and employees.
- Dried bird manure when rubbed or disturbed becomes airborne and can be inhaled by workers and animals. (Salmonella)
- Starlings have been described as flying RATS!!

Control thoughts and Ideas

- Dairy facilities are food-producing facilities. Bird control needs the same attention as rodent and other vermin control.
- 1. Cleanliness is #1- Concrete is expensive and eliminates MUD but is it a bird magnet on your farm?
- Bunkers, piles feed bunks in free stall barns are impossible to totally protect and cover 24/7/365 or maybe ever.
- No barn is 100% bird proof. Bird netting etc. helps over natural ventilation openings that are permanent. Birds can still fly in and out by the door but they are then concentrated and bird repellents can be more effective then.