

What works

## Open season on starlings

Chemcentral solves nesting and droppings problems with sonic blasts

Imagine for a minute that you're a plant superintendent in an industrial setting. Your company's product is volatile and flammable so, for safety, your warehouse needs to have an open-air dock. Your inventory occupies 70,000 square feet of floor space.

Up on the rafters and girders they gather — pigeons, robins and starlings, making themselves comfortable in your man-made shelter. "With the nesting came droppings, feces and eggs," says William Spangler, plant superintendent at Chemcentral's Cincinnati plant. "The floor looked like a mowed hayfield. We'd clean it up, and the next morning we'd face the same scene." In short, Spangler says, day after day, "it was a big pain." Starlings were the most prevalent and the worst offenders, he adds.

Chemcentral is the largest privately owned chemical distributor in the world, with annual sales of \$880 million. Founded in 1926, the family-owned business has 30 plants in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and South America, plus partnerships in Asia and Europe.

"The company packages chemicals in 55-gallon steel drums," Spangler explains, "and we store the drums in the warehouse. You can't send drums slathered in bird droppings to customers," he says. "It's both a health issue and a packaging issue." The excrement also presented a health hazard for workers.

"In our Detroit plant, we tried using large plastic owls to scare away the birds. The birds just landed on the owls," Spangler says. They also tried sending aloft balloons with glaring eyes. The birds were not deterred.

Spangler heard about a sonic device called Super BirdXpeller PRO, made and distributed by Chicago-based Bird-X ([www.bird-x.com](http://www.bird-x.com)). His crew installed one unit and got immediate response. "We turned it on and the birds took off," he says. "The first blast not only scared the birds, but also our employees."

He adjusted the unit's four speakers, which were located at the sides of the plant. "The birds flew out and roosted in trees. They came back and got blasted again," he says. Gradually, the crowd of birds thinned to a trickle. "It interrupted their roosting — that's the key point," Spangler says. "It cut way back on their nesting. The birds would hear the Expeller and fly out."

The unit is based on 40 years of research and success with sonic repellers. It emits distress cries that convey danger to pigeons, starlings, gulls and other bird species, and it also duplicates the harsh cries of predators, such as falcons and hawks, to stimulate additional fear and flight. Sound waves move from speaker to speaker, producing a menacing sonic

shield covering as much as six acres. For maximum effect, volume and frequency of bird cries can be randomized.

Bird-X president Ron Schwarcz says, "It works equally well in semi-enclosed areas and in wide open spaces, such as rooftops, parking lots, power station towers, stadiums, billboards — anywhere that birds congregate." The disruptive power is effective in a variety of industrial and commercial settings, yet it doesn't harm the birds or the environment. "It simply aggravates and frightens the birds," Schwarcz says.

The repeller changed the landscape (and floorscape) for the better at Chemcentral's Cincinnati and Detroit plants. "And," adds Spangler, "we saved money by eliminating daily clean-up costs."



Finished products now remain excrement-free thanks to electronically-generated distress and predator cries.

In the Cincinnati plant, he's about to experiment with the timing of BirdXpeller's sonic bursts. "Our hours of plant operations are 4:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.," he notes, "so I'm thinking we could turn off the unit at night. It's a loud sound; and even though we're located in an industrial park, the sound could carry to residential areas." He has had no complaints, but why take a chance if the unit can remain silent for most of the nighttime hours? "I'm not sure if the birds will return at night, and I'd like to find out," he says.

As for daylight hours, Spangler counts on BirdXpeller to protect the company's open dock, warehouse workers, and the now-pristine 55-gallon drums. "It really works. The sound reaches all four corners of the warehouse. We who work here have become accustomed to the sound, but one drawback is that we have to explain the noise to visitors." He sees it as a small price to pay for keeping noxious, pesky birds out of everyone's hair.