



A publication prepared exclusively for members of the  
National Wildlife Control Operators Association

# NWCOA NEWS

Issue: 46  
Quarterly Newsletter

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## NWCOA AT LEGISLATIVE DAY IN WASHINGTON D.C.!

NWCOA continues to advocate for the wildlife control industry. We strive to stay in front of public policy opportunities and challenges for wildlife control operators and other stakeholders. Jim Goins, Training Coordinator (left), Drew Cowley, President (middle), and Charles Holt, Operations Manager (right), attended Legislation Day in Washington D.C. on March 10th through the 12th, 2024.

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# THE USE OF GRAPE FLAVORING TO REPEL PEST BIRDS

By: Rolie Calzadilla, BirdHazer.com

Using grape flavoring to repel pest birds is not exactly accurate, but for the purposes of this article, it's a good place to start. Like many other pest bird solutions in the marketplace, the genesis of this one came from the need to protect agricultural crops and livestock feed from pest birds feeding on them. Farmers and ranchers alike have always struggled with losses and health risks from pest birds and are a huge driving force for innovation in our "structural" side of the Pest Bird Industry.

Back in 1985 when I was a sophomore in high school and still learning about the birds and the bees, research scientists were looking for cost effective alternatives to the commonly used physical barriers and scare devices when they began testing liquid forms of this grape flavoring additive to disrupt the feeding behaviors of pest birds. They soon discovered that the best way to affect the pest birds was by vaporizing the liquid and having them inhale it.

## What is this grape flavoring and how does it work?

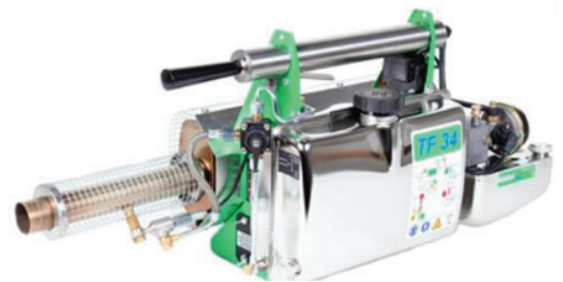
This grape flavoring agent is formally called Methyl-Anthranilate or MA for short and is currently sold as a pest bird solution using several brand names (in alphabetical order): Avian Control, Avian Migrate, Avian Fog Force, Bird-B-Gone Avian Block, Bird-B-Gone Bird-Out, Bird-X Bird Stop, EcoBird Eco 4.0 and EcoBird Eco 14.5.

MA is a natural component of concord grapes and other plant materials, is generally recognized as safe (GRAS), is US EPA listed and FDA approved as a common food flavoring and fragrance additive in addition to being used as a bird repellent. When a bird inhales or ingests the MA, it irritates the trigeminal nerve in its beak causing temporary discomfort. The bird exhibits a biological response mid-flight to avoid the vapor and cannot adapt

to the MA over time. It is completely harmless to the bird since the effects wear off when it leaves the area. Since it only affects avian biology, it does not have the described effect on people, pets, or other animals. Some people may find the aroma unpleasant, while others love it, but most people just don't care, they're happy the MA is doing its job... Since taste and smell are so linked, you can eat a grape Jolly Rancher candy or drink a grape soda to find out exactly what MA smells like.

Since a bird's breathing is heavier during flight the MA has a better effect vs when it's just perching. It's also more effective on some bird species vs others. Generally speaking, the larger the bird and its beak the better, with the exception of turkey vultures, who are in my humble opinion, the honey badger of pest birds. They just don't give a damn!

There are two primary application methods, spraying and aerosolizing. Dilutable water-based formulations are commonly used for spraying and oil-based ready-to-use formulations are commonly used for aerosolizing. Although water-based formulations can be aerosolized using a ULV fogger, the particle size is too large vs aerosolizing an oil-based formulation thermally. The only oil-based product currently on the market for thermal aerosolized application methods is the EcoBird 4.0 fluid.



There are also two primary delivery systems, one-time and continuous. One-time can be like the thermal fogger (pictured above and available from Nixalite) that can consume one gallon of MA in

less than 5 minutes while it fills an airplane hangar or a pressurized sprayer for turf and hardscape applications. Continuous can be any one of several programmable units (like the one pictured below and available from Bird Buffer) that can continuously dispense varying amounts of the EcoBird 4.0 oil-based formulation during different times of the day and even days of the week.



## MA's Operational Challenges

The two biggest challenges with MA as a pest bird repellent have been the cost of the liquid and the cost of the delivery system. As PCO's we can't do much to mitigate the cost of the liquid, it's expensive to produce and formulate. The real opportunities come with advances in technology to the delivery systems that drive down the equipment and liquid consumption costs. How can we keep the MA in the air long enough for a pest bird to inhale it? Although there are some instances where liquid applications are effective, the best results come when the pest birds breathe it in. So, the smaller the particle size, the longer it stays in the air, the better the chance for success. Another key question is, how can we cover as large a volume of space as possible using as little product as possible?

About 20 years ago when I started in this business, the only programmable delivery systems available were complex and expensive machines with costs starting in the thousands of dollar range. They're still available (like the one pictured above from Bird Buffer) and used today, but due to the capital investment and consumption of MA, their initial and ongoing cost make them more viable for industrial and higher end commercial locations

than for smaller commercial and residential locations. An exception is the time release sprayer commonly found in restrooms for odor control. Avian Fog Force developed a can that contains MA and can be used in these time release devices. The challenge is that it sprays too large a particle size and its applications are limited because the product doesn't stay airborne long enough. Like inkjet printers and ink cartridges, the equipment cost (printer) is the initial investment, but the product cost (EcoBird 4.0) is the ongoing expense that can over time supersede the equipment cost, especially as equipment costs are driven down.

So, logically this solution is also very dependent on wind direction and speed. Too much in the wrong direction and it wastes away, not enough and it doesn't cover a large enough space. So, device placement is critical. With the exception of the larger volume "industrial" units described above, this solution is best used in semi-enclosed outdoor spaces where pest birds are creating risks due mainly to their feeding/foraging behavior. Places like greenhouses, loading docks, terraces, balconies, and outdoor dining areas for example.

## Current Situation

Fast forward to present time and advances in technology in other industries like scenting and vaping have given our industry relatively effective delivery systems at much lower prices. Lowering both equipment and MA consumption costs. I partnered with Roth Chemicals, the manufacturer of EcoBird fluids and we came up with an effective, low price, low consumption mechanical delivery system taking advantage of these advances in technology. Visit [BirdHazer.com](http://BirdHazer.com) to find out more about it. Bird-B-Gone also recently came out with two clever MA based products, Bird Out Aromatic Bird Repellent (pictured to the right) and Avian Block. Both "technically" aerosolize the



MA, but not mechanically. The MA is released using ambient air flow that affords low-price solutions for unique situations.

Another interesting new product from Roth Chemicals is the ready-to-use EcoBird 14.5 Bird Repellent Can (pictured to the right and available from Animal Traps and Supplies) which sprays a water-based MA formulation like a can of wasp spray for spot treatment and other creative applications. Other water-based, liquid MA concentrations like Avian Control, Avian Migrate, Bird Stop and EcoBird 14.5 are diluted with water and sprayed for agricultural/commodities uses and on non-agricultural sites like turf, garbage, hardscapes, waste/trash, and spot repelling. Applications can be made through spray wands, sprinkling systems, drip lines, misting machines or pump sprayers. Make sure to read and follow label directions for the specific product being used as each may have its own restrictions on sites and bird species. Bird Barrier and Nixalite offer the Avian branded products, Bird-X has Bird Stop and EcoBird can be found at Nixalite and BirdHazer.com.



made MA based solutions more affordable and easier to sell even with a little trial and error.

In your customer's eyes, you are the best solution for their pest bird challenges, not any of the ever growing list of available products. Talk to all the manufacturers and distributors, read the labels and product literature, get trained and have the largest pest bird toolbelt available. Learn to manage your client's expectations while under promising and over delivering! Be safe, have some fun and make a good living while helping your customers solve their unique pest bird challenges with humane and effective solutions.

### About the Author:

Rolie Calzadilla has over 20 years of experience in bird control with much of it at a National level working for companies like Steritech, Rentokil, Copesan and Terminix. He is active in industry associations like National Wildlife Control Operator's Association (NWCOA) and Florida Pest Management Association (FPMA) where he has helped create professional bird training and advocates for the industry with regulators and other interest groups. For the last three years he has owned and operated Pest Wildlife Pro, a Southeast Florida wildlife control business and more recently BirdHazer.com a web-based retailer and distributor for some of these creative MA-based solutions. He can be reached via email at: [rolie@birdhazer.com](mailto:rolie@birdhazer.com) or directly at 786-495-6305.

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### Where the Rubber Meets the Road

So, how can I make money with MA you ask? The long and the short is, MA is not a silver-bullet. Like with any other pest bird solution, you need to possibly combine it with other solutions like physical barriers, scare tactics and population reduction when appropriate. MA is best used in semi-enclosed spaces with limited external air flow and regular internal air movement from ceiling fans, for example.

The good news is that all these MA solutions are relatively easy to use and can provide what we PCO's covet the most... RECURRING REVENUE. MA dissipates and needs to remain at the target site requiring applications and/or service at regular intervals. These advances in technology have

