

Controlling Birds and Rodents for Verified Veal

With the start of the warm weather pests such as rodents and birds emerge. This time of year birds and rodents are nesting and reproducing at high numbers, and left uncontrolled, can cause a lot of damage to animals, humans, feed supplies, and the barn.

When it comes to rodents, even small populations can eat high quantities of grain and contaminate hay, water and other farm supplies. Mice and rats are also big disease carriers and can transmit diseases such as salmonella, toxoplasma and other parasites to humans and cattle. Rodents can sometimes travel up to several kilometers so could travel between farms spreading disease from one facility to another. They also pose a risk for barn fires since they are known to chew on electrical wires in addition to insulation and the barn structure. Strategies to control rodents include proper feed storage, strategic placement of traps and bait, reducing barn openings and using ultrasonic sound generators.

Birds cause similar problems to rodents, since they can contaminate feed and water, and carry diseases such as salmonella, crypto, and toxoplasma. Additionally, bird droppings can corrode farm equipment, nests can plug gutters or drain pipes, and they can damage insulation. To prevent birds from gaining access to the barn adding a ridge to eaves or roof trusses, installing bird netting, window screens, and bird spikes can all be used to prevent nesting in the barn and ultrasonic sound generators can also be effective. Proper feed storage is also important since pigeons and starlings will eat what they can find but have a preference for grain.

Developing a farm specific pest control program is very important to reduce the risks associated with birds and rodents, and is included as a requirement for the Verified Veal Program (VVP). Based on the recommended protocols outlined in the VVP, the farm must have a pest control program in place with records that include:

- The name of the person in charge of pest control
- The names of chemicals used and the procedures associated with them
- The locations of bait stations including a map
- The placement of traps
- Reducing garbage and empty feed bags that could provide shelter for pests
- Plugging holes to keep rodents out of the facility

The pest control protocols in the VVP, like other management protocols outlined in the program are relatively straight forward and are already implemented on many farms. Therefore becoming part of the VVP would only require minor management and record keeping changes for many producers.

The VVP is the Canadian on farm food safety program for veal and addresses the consumer demand for safe high quality food. The program involves a set of standard protocols and documentation to prove compliance with the program. The VVP is available to all Canadian veal producers and is currently voluntary in Ontario. With the increase in media attention and consumer concerns with food safety, it is becoming increasingly important to be involved in on farm food safety programs to maintain a place in the Canadian and international marketplace.

For more information on verified veal or to enroll in the program please contact Nancy Stonos at Veal Farmers of Ontario at 519-824-2942 or nstonos@livestockalliance.ca.