

## NFU BIRD SCARERS CODE

Bird scarers and bird deterrents are essential to protect many crops including oilseed rape, fruit and field vegetables from damage by wildbirds. However, if used thoughtlessly they can seriously annoy and disturb the public, thus fuelling the pressure for strict legal controls or a ban on their use. Just a few inconsiderate actions could threaten the ability of all growers to protect their crops in future. So please follow this code, which is designed to minimise public aggravation whilst allowing effective crop protection.

### Types of scarer

**Auditory:** these may imitate the sound of gunfire, use sirens or a constant hum, or mimic the distress call of a bird.

**Visual:** these rely on the birds' fear of humans, other predatory birds and of sudden movements.

Some scarers and deterrents combine sound and visual stimuli.

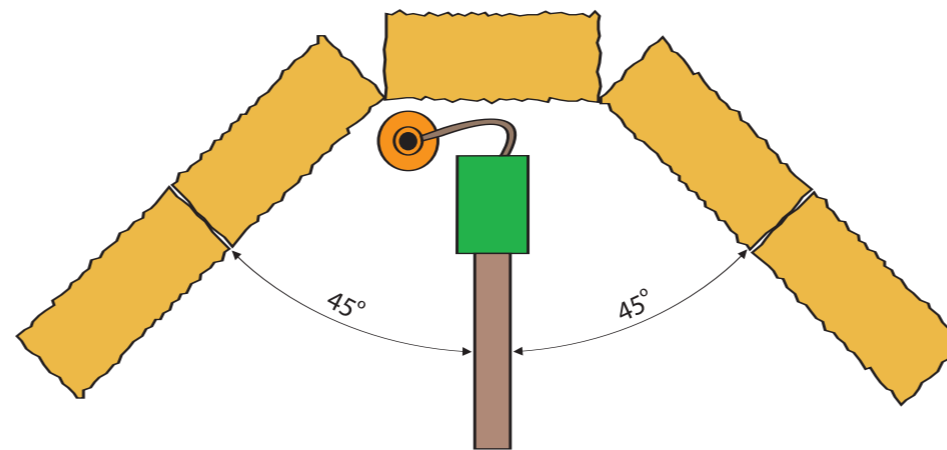


Auditory scarer

### Avoid causing a nuisance

Where it is practical to do so, you should seek to minimise the impact of auditory scarers, on your neighbours and consider alternative means of scaring birds. Below are some steps you can take to act responsibly:

- When they are in use, the disturbance of scarers on nearby hospitals, homes or schools should be minimised. For example, place the scarers as far away as practicable, align them to point away from neighbours, and use baffles.
- Avoid using auditory scarers within at least 200m (220 yards) of sensitive buildings before 7.00am, or before 6.00am elsewhere, when sunrise is earlier. Use another method in the early morning and do not use after 10.00pm when sunset is later.
- Take account of the prevailing wind when siting scarers. Remember that noise travels much further downwind.
- Where mechanical timers are used, ensure that they are regularly re-set to take account of continuous changes in sunrise and sunset times.
- Where a photoelectric cell controls the guns' operation, ensure that this is kept clean and free from obstruction. Preferably, ensure that a mechanical timer backs up a photoelectric switch.
- Use reflective or absorbent baffles (of say corrugated iron or straw bales) to concentrate the sound on to your field and away from neighbours wherever nuisance could be caused. These can be very effective in reducing noise levels in the required direction.



Suggested layout of baffles for auditory scarer



Auditory scarer with baffles

- Try not to use auditory scarers on Sundays. Try another type of scarer instead.
- Ensure that your neighbours have the name of a responsible person to contact if the control on a scarer fails. Also display the name and telephone number at the nearest point of public access or inform the local Environmental Health Department where the scarer is located and give them contact details of the person responsible.
- Ensure that scarers are properly maintained and checked regularly to detect any malfunctions that could cause complaints.

### Positioning

- Place scarers as far apart as possible so that their combined effect does not cause a nuisance, taking account of the lie of the land, atmospheric conditions and plant cover.
- Position scarers so that they are pointing down-wind (where nuisance is not a problem) – even a slight wind can affect the distance sound travels – and take particular care with devices that swivel with the wind.
- Prolong the effectiveness of scarers by hiding them - but not where there could a risk of fire.

### Increasing effectiveness

- Reinforce the effects of the scarer by shooting, so that the noise is associated with real danger.
- Try placing a scarer inside a brightly-coloured container and place several similar, but empty containers in the field. Occasionally move the scarer from one container to another.

## Reducing the need for scarers

It may be possible to reduce the need for scarers and increase the effectiveness of those used by:

- Planting (where your crop rotation allows) crops vulnerable to bird damage next to roads or in other locations where the birds will be disturbed.
- Alternatively, when planning new areas of valuable crops (particularly orchards or soft fruit areas), try and locate them as far away from buildings where people sleep or where quiet is important, so that if it is necessary to resort to the use of auditory scarers their impact will be minimised.
- Growing small-scale crops under netting. Fencing or electrified netting can protect crops near watercourses from swans and geese. Strings or tape suspended roughly 50 metres apart may prevent waterfowl flying into crops.

## Choosing scarers

- Use as many different types of effective scarers as you can; visual, auditory and repellants can all have a role to play. Birds quickly get used to scarers, so it's a good idea to use a variety of scarers to maintain their novelty.
- Consider the intended location; for example, are there sensitive locations nearby? Use auditory scarers as a last resort after trying alternatives. Never use noisy scarers near buildings where people sleep or where quiet is important. Do not site scarers prone to theft where they can be easily stolen.

## Using timed auditory scarers

- As soon as an auditory scarer loses effectiveness, replace it with another of a different type; otherwise it could signal a good feeding area.
- Use auditory scarers only when their use can be justified.
- Think carefully about the use of propane gas guns. Inconsiderate use may lead to complaints and you may have to appear in court.
- Do not fire them more than four times in any hour (remember to consider situations where several guns protect a single field). Birds can take much more than 15 minutes to regroup. If the intervals are too short, the birds will quickly get used to the scarer. All the reports from a multiple discharge gun should count as one report if heard within 30 seconds.
- Never use auditory scarers before sunrise or after sunset.
- Liaise with neighbouring farmers to ensure that, between you, you do not cause a nuisance.

## Using scarers of all types

- Use scarers as infrequently as possible. Determine when the crop is most vulnerable and only use scarers then. However, if geese are seen near a crop, scarers should be positioned immediately.
- Prolong the effectiveness of a scarer by varying the type and positioning of scarers.

## Scarers and rights of way

Scarers are intended to frighten birds, not visitors to the countryside. Try to avoid surprising passers-by.

- Try to avoid positioning auditory scarers adjacent to rights of way. Consider warning users of their presence.
- Remember that horses are easily frightened and can bolt or unseat their riders. Do not position the scarers near roads or bridleways usually used by riders.

Look to lessen the potential danger by taking these safety precautions:

- Maximise the distance between the scarer and the road or bridleway.
- Point the scarer away from nearby roads or bridleways.
- Where appropriate use a baffle (as illustrated earlier in this leaflet).
- Consider erecting temporary signs to warn riders. Don't forget to remove these after use.

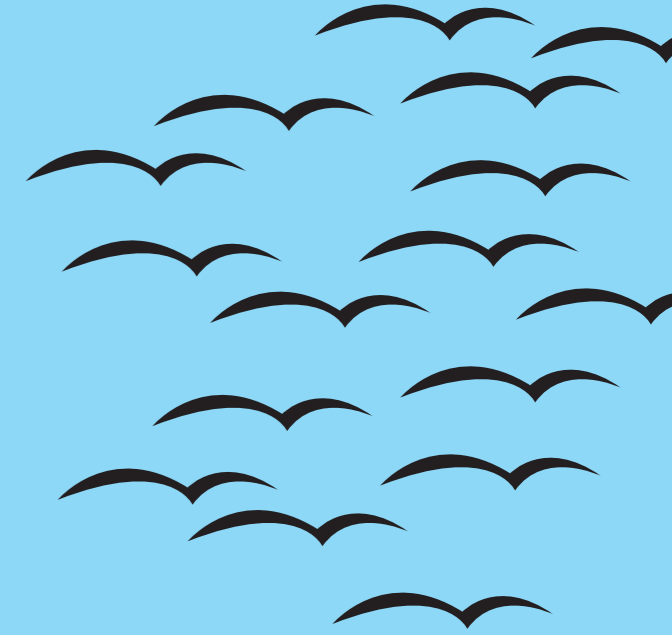
## Relevant Legal Controls

The Firearms Act 1968 requires a firearms certificate to be obtained if bird scaring cartridges are used.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 includes powers to deal with nuisance from auditory bird scarers. These have been used successfully to stop offending farmers using such scarers.

The Air Navigation Order 1980 requires the consent of the Civil Aviation Authority to fly kites or balloons (visual scarers) above 60 metres (200 feet).

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 protects wild birds. General licences are issued by DEFRA and the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) which allow authorised persons (including owners and occupiers of land and their representatives) to take and kill certain species regarded as "pest birds". Some other species can only be killed under a licence issued by DEFRA and the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). Scarers likely to injure wild birds are prohibited.



# BIRD SCARERS

CODE OF PRACTICE