

Accepted Customs and Standards for Bird Frightening Devices within Commercial Vineyards and Orchards

The standards listed below define what are the “accepted customs and standards” as described in the County of El Dorado’s Right-to-Farm Ordinance. When responding to complaints the Agricultural Commissioner’s Office will use these standards to determine whether the propane cannons and electronic sound devices are used according to proper and accepted customs and standards.

The standards balance the need by growers to manage bird pests while minimizing the impact of these devices to residential neighbors. The standards are as follows:

1. Propane cannons and electronic sound devices are to be used only for bird species that are causing crop damage.
2. Audible frightening devices (gas cannons, electronic noisemakers, distress calls, shot gun shells and other audible devices.), at best, only give short term results since birds habituate to them after a short time period. Therefore, frightening devices need to be employed correctly-at the appropriate time period-and in concert with other management strategies.
3. The damage should be identified, monitored and documented.
4. Propane cannons and electronic sound devices should be rotated with other bird control techniques. Continuous use of propane cannons or electronic sound devices is not known to be effective.
5. Propane cannons and electronic sound devices are not to be used in the dormant season except during the time close to bud break if there has been previous documented damage during bud swelling or bud break.
6. Propane cannons and electronic sound devices are not to be used from bud break to the start of veraison in vineyards.
7. Propane cannons and electronic sound devices are not to be used in orchards until fruit or berries begin to change color.
8. If there is no on-site resident of the property, adjacent neighbors will be notified about the intended use of propane cannons and/or electronic sound devices, when and how they will be operated and who to call if there is an operational problem with the device.
9. Propane cannons and electronic sound devices should be monitored daily and adjusted to sunrise and sunset times.

10. Noise devices are to be operated only during daylight hours, between 30 minutes before local sunrise and 30 minutes after local sunset.
11. The minimum firing interval for each propane cannon is three minutes.
12. No more than one (1) propane cannon shall be allowed for every five (5) acres of land in production of a crop.
13. A propane cannon should be moved every 3-5 days so birds do not get used to its location. The type of noise making device should also change periodically.
14. Propane cannons that swivel should be properly leveled so they spin uniformly.
15. A stationary propane cannon shall not be directed towards any residence or pasture where there are animals. Buffering devices, such as but not limited to hay bales, should be used to mitigate sound from carrying toward a residence or pasture.
16. Reasonable attempts shall be made to place the noise making device as far as possible from any adjacent residence.
17. If bird problems continue other strategies, such as netting, falconry, trapping, habitat modification, etc., should be considered.

Operating a noise making device in a manner inconsistent with the standards in this document can result in a referral to Code Enforcement. A Notice to Correct (NTC) can be issued by Code Enforcement. If inconsistent use continues, an Administrative Citation, along with associated fines and fees can be issued and the case can be referred to the District Attorney. The CA Department of Fish & Wildlife will be consulted as to the legal status of the damaging species before depredation control is undertaken.