

## Beating the Birds

*R.W. Delaney, Business Writer*

"It was like sitting in a chicken coop," says Will Kramer. Kramer is maintenance supervisor for Griffin Corporation in Casa Grande, Arizona, about 45 miles south of Phoenix. Pigeons had invaded the company's main building complex. They were roosting near the main entrance, where Griffin employees entered every day, and near the water cooler in the bagging station area of the attached warehouse. "It was a huge mess," Kramer summarizes, "and it had been going on forever."

### Open Rafters Attract Dirty Birds

When Kramer was promoted to maintenance supervisor a year and a half ago, he was asked by the operations manager to take care of the pigeon problem.

"It was one of the top priorities given to me," Kramer says. Griffin's main building is metal with a trestle-type roof superstructure and many pipes and water lines. "It's very hot in Arizona, and the birds came inside to find shady spots," Kramer says. "Pigeons sat on the rafters, roosted all night, and dropped all night. They messed up the entire area where people entered the administrative offices."

Griffin makes copper sulphate, which is used in the agriculture industry, and copper carbonate, which is sold to other chemical companies. The company is headquartered in Valdosta, Georgia.

Griffin's main office and warehouse complex is about 100' X 150', with open ceiling rafters. The birds were able to fly in through the open loading dock doors on the north end of the building or through the door left open on the south end of the building to permit the breeze to blow through, Kramer explains. "In the storeroom area, the air was particularly unpleasant to breathe," he says, noting that pigeons are "smelly birds." In addition, the area near the bagging station, where chemical products are put into 50-pound bags and then loaded onto pallets, "was unsightly -- especially around the water cooler" where employees naturally congregated.

Besides being unsightly, the droppings posed a major problem in terms of cleanliness. "There are health laws regarding bird poop in processing areas," Kramer points out. Bird droppings often harbor fungi that can cause serious -- even fatal -- lung diseases (namely, histoplasmosis and cryptococcosis) when the spores are transmitted to humans who may breathe in the harmful fecal dust.

"My back was to the wall with the pigeon problem," Kramer says. And to the ceiling, the entrance, the water cooler, and the bagging station.

### Unseating the Birds

"Before I was Maintenance Supervisor, someone else in the company had tried using high-frequency squawkers to get rid of the pigeons. The pigeons sat on them. I'm not sure that loud noises are so effective," he concludes.

"We tried a pellet gun, but you must be a perfect shot. And the pigeons just fly away momentarily and come back. They're smart; they recognize a gun," he says.

"Then an ad for Bird-Proof in a chemical trade magazine caught my eye." Bird-Proof is a highly effective bird-deterrent gel made by Bird-X, Inc. in Chicago. It is a transparent gel that repels pest birds from their normal roosting areas. When Bird-Proof is applied on ledges, beams, rafters, cornices, ornamental copings and similar favorite "landing sites," the gel compound discourages birds from alighting and nesting -- for a year or more, even under most extreme weather conditions. Bird-Proof gel has a tacky feeling that birds shun; yet it's harmless, odorless, nonpoisonous and environmentally safe. It's easy to apply with any standard caulking gun. Bird-Proof is also available in liquid form for easy spraying on trees and over other large surfaces or less accessible areas.

After reading the ad, Kramer was convinced. "'This is probably the best way to do it,' I thought -- a permanent solution.

So I ordered a case of 12 cartridges," he says. "That was more than a year ago, and we've had no pigeons since."

Bird-Proof is easy to use. "You don't need much. We just applied it on the pipes and everywhere the pigeons roosted. We used a lift truck with a man cage," he says, to apply Bird-Proof gel with a caulking gun.

"We put the gel on and waited. In two or three days, the pigeons were walking around with balls of feathers and debris on their feet. They looked funny," he recalls. "The sticky stuff did the job. The pigeons didn't bother us anymore. It was 100 percent effective as a deterrent," Kramer says. "There were no ill effects from Bird-Proof," he adds. "It was just sticky and made roosting uncomfortable for the pigeons."

### **Bird-Proof Bonuses Continue**

"We saved on cleanup costs," says Kramer. Before the application of Bird-Proof, "a crew member used to spend one hour every morning scraping off bird droppings." The Bird-Proof gel has now been on the Griffin site for well over a year and has probably lost some of its original stickiness. Yet, says Kramer, "even if it isn't tacky anymore, the pigeons avoid the residual gel on sight," giving Kramer a continuing psychological advantage over the pesky pigeons. "They know it's bad stuff."

Kramer is quite pleased with the results. "I plan to get another carton or two of Bird-Proof," he says, "to discourage the birds from moving into additional areas." The best defense is a good offense, and Kramer remembers well what it was like before Bird-Proof. Asked whether the problem had been mildly irritating or worse, Kramer says adamantly, "Worse! On a scale of one to ten, it was eight." Now he has the pigeons behind the 8-ball.

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