Managing Canada Geese on Your Property

A Guide for Residents and Property Owners

City of Brampton – Animal Services

Canada geese are protected under the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994. This guide explains what you can do on your own, what requires a permit, and how to obtain one.

Understanding the Legal Framework

Canada geese are protected under federal law by the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994 (MBCA) and the Migratory Birds Regulations, 2022 (MBR). It is illegal to harm, disturb, or destroy Canada geese, their nests, or their eggs without proper authorization from Environment and Climate Change Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS).

Before taking any action that could affect geese, their nests, or their eggs, you must understand what is and is not permitted under the law.

What You Can Do Without a Permit

The following actions do not require a permit and can be done at any time on your own property:

- Modify your habitat to make it less attractive to geese (see Section 5)
- Use non-harmful scare techniques to discourage geese from settling
- Stop feeding geese and encourage your neighbours to do the same
- Install physical barriers such as fences, hedges, or dense shoreline plantings
- Allow your lawn to grow longer, as geese prefer short, manicured grass
- Use noise deterrents such as air horns, clapping, or motion-activated devices

Key principle: You may scare or harass geese without a permit as long as no geese, goslings, eggs, or nests are harmed in the process.

What Requires a Permit

The following actions are illegal without a valid Damage or Danger Permit from CWS:

- Destroying, disturbing, or relocating a goose nest
- Removing, oiling, addling, or otherwise destroying goose eggs
- Capturing, relocating, or killing geese
- Using a firearm or aircraft to scare geese

Important: Violations of the MBCA can result in significant fines. Even well-intentioned actions such as removing a nest that is blocking a doorway require a permit.

Our Recommended Approach

The City of Brampton provides education, site assessments, and guidance to help residents manage conflicts with Canada geese. However, we do not provide direct wildlife management services such as egg addling, nest removal, or goose relocation on private property.

Our recommended approach for residents dealing with persistent goose conflicts:

Step 1	Contact City of Brampton Animal Services for an initial assessment and advice on habitat modifications and aversion techniques you can implement immediately.
Step 2	If the problem persists and more direct intervention is needed, apply for a Damage or Danger Permit through the Canadian Wildlife Service (see detailed guidance in Section 3).
Step 3	Once your permit is issued, hire a licensed wildlife management company to carry out the permitted activities. These professionals are trained in humane techniques and will ensure all legal requirements and permit conditions are met.

This three-step process ensures that geese are managed humanely, legally, and effectively.

The CWS Damage or Danger Permit – In Detail

The Damage or Danger Permit is the primary permit that authorizes private property owners to take action regarding Canada geese, their nests, or their eggs. It is issued under sections 65, 70, and 71 of the Migratory Birds Regulations, 2022, and is administered by the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS), a division of Environment and Climate Change Canada.

These permits are free of charge and are valid until the expiry date indicated on the permit, or until December 31 of the year of issue if no expiry date is listed.

Types of Permitted Activities

A single Damage or Danger Permit application can request authorization for one or more of the following activities. CWS will determine which activities to authorize based on the specific circumstances described in your application.

Permitted Activity	Description
Scaring (using firearms or aircraft)	Authorizes the use of firearms (blank rounds or cracker shells) or aircraft to scare geese from the area. This is appropriate when standard non-permit scare techniques have been unsuccessful.
Egg and Nest Destruction	Authorizes the taking and destruction of eggs and/or the removal and destruction of nests. This is the most common permit activity for residential and commercial properties. Methods include egg oiling (coating eggs with food-grade corn oil), egg removal, and physical nest removal.
Relocation of Birds	Authorizes the capture and transport of live geese to another approved location. This is typically used by municipalities for large-scale management and requires an approved receiving site. Note: relocation of Canada goose eggs or nests to another property is generally not authorized.
Kill-to-Support-Scaring	Authorizes the killing of a small number of geese to reinforce the effectiveness of scaring activities at the site. This is only authorized when scaring alone has proven ineffective.
Kill-to-Remove	Authorizes the killing of geese to directly reduce the number at a specific location. This is typically reserved for situations involving significant public safety concerns (e.g., airport operations) and is not commonly issued for residential properties.

For most residential property owners, the Egg and Nest Destruction permit is the most relevant option.

This permit allows you (or a hired wildlife management company acting on your behalf as a nominee) to oil eggs, remove eggs, and/or destroy nests on your property to reduce the local goose population over time.

Who Can Apply

Damage or Danger Permits can only be issued to individuals (not to companies or organizations) who meet one of the following criteria:

- You own the property where the geese are causing the problem
- You lease or manage the property
- You hold an easement, servitude, right-of-way, or licence of occupation on the land

If you hire a wildlife management company to carry out the permitted activities, that company's personnel must be listed as nominees on your permit. You, as the permit holder, remain responsible for ensuring all permit conditions are met.

Alternatively, a wildlife management company may apply for the permit on your behalf if you provide them with a signed Letter of Authorization confirming their role as land manager for migratory bird management purposes.

Letter of Authorization – Government of Canada Template

If you are authorizing a wildlife management company to apply for and carry out permitted activities on your property, you must provide them with a signed Letter of Authorization. The Government of Canada provides an official template for this purpose.

The letter confirms that you, as the property owner or lessee, authorize the permit applicant/holder to act on your behalf for migratory bird management and grant them access to your property for the duration of the permit term. The letter must include the property address, your name and signature, and the time period for which you authorize activities.

Download the template at:

canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/migratory-bird-permits/application-forms/authorization-conduct-damage-danger-activities.html

Note: The permit holder is responsible for ensuring the letter has been signed by the current landowner, land manager, or lessee, and that it has been submitted to the relevant CWS regional office.

Eligibility Requirements

CWS will only issue a permit if the geese are causing or are likely to cause:

- Danger to human health or public safety, or
- Damage to the use of the land or to agricultural interests

You must also demonstrate that other non-permit management techniques (habitat modification, aversion conditioning, and deterrents) have been attempted and have been unsuccessful in resolving the conflict. CWS expects applicants to have tried reasonable alternatives before resorting to permit-based interventions.

How to Apply

The application process involves the following steps:

1. Obtain the application form from the Government of Canada website at: canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/migratory-bird-permits/application-forms.html

2. Complete all sections of the form, including a description of the property, the species involved, the nature of the damage or danger, what non-permit techniques you have already tried, and the specific activities you are requesting authorization to perform.
3. If applicable, list all nominees (individuals who will carry out the permitted activities on your behalf, such as employees of a wildlife management company).
4. Submit the completed application by email (preferred), fax, or regular mail to the CWS Ontario regional office (see contact details below).
5. Wait for CWS to process your application. Processing times vary; CWS processes applications on a first-come, first-served basis. Incomplete or unsigned applications will cause delays.
6. Once issued, carry out only the activities authorized under your permit, in accordance with all conditions listed on the permit.
7. Submit a mandatory activity report at the end of the permit period, even if no activities were carried out. Outstanding reports from previous permits must be submitted before CWS will process a new application.

Timing Tip

Apply early. The best time to submit your application is in January or February, well before nesting season begins in March. Permit processing can take several weeks, and you want your permit in hand before geese begin laying eggs. If your permit has not been issued by the time eggs are laid, you cannot legally intervene.

Permit Conditions and Reporting

All Damage or Danger Permits come with conditions that must be followed. Common conditions include:

- Only the activities specifically listed on the permit may be carried out
- Activities may only occur within the geographic area described on the permit
- Activities may only occur during the time period specified on the permit
- The permit holder must maintain records of all activities (number of nests found, eggs treated, method used, dates, etc.)
- A mandatory activity report must be submitted to CWS by the date specified on the permit
- For egg and nest destruction, CWS best practices must be followed (e.g., using only 100% food-grade corn oil for egg oiling)
- The permit does not authorize harm to adult geese or goslings unless specifically stated

Failure to comply with permit conditions can result in permit cancellation, refusal of future permits, and potential prosecution under the MBCA.

Why We Recommend Hiring a Professional

While the permit can be issued directly to a property owner, we strongly recommend hiring a licensed wildlife management company to carry out the permitted activities. These professionals:

- Are trained in humane egg addling and nest management techniques
- Understand the timing and biology of Canada goose nesting
- Can safely approach active nests and manage defensive adult geese
- Can ensure proper record-keeping and reporting to CWS
- Can be listed as nominees on your permit, meaning they act under your authorization
- Many wildlife management companies will also handle the permit application process on your behalf

Common Egg Addling Methods

If your permit authorizes egg and nest destruction, the following are the most commonly used humane methods for preventing eggs from hatching. These should only be performed by trained individuals under a valid permit.

Egg Oiling

The most widely used method. Eggs are coated with 100% food-grade corn oil, which blocks air from passing through the shell and prevents the embryo from developing. Oiled eggs are returned to the nest so the goose continues to incubate them, which discourages her from laying a replacement clutch. This method is reported to be 95–100% effective when done correctly.

Egg Removal and Nest Destruction

Eggs and nest material are physically removed and disposed of as directed by CWS. This method is simpler but may prompt the goose to re-nest and lay additional eggs, requiring repeated visits to the site.

Egg Replacement

Real eggs are removed and replaced with dummy eggs to trick the goose into continuing to incubate. This prevents re-nesting but requires a supply of realistic dummy eggs.

Humane timing: Eggs should only be addled within the first 14 days of incubation. After that point, embryo development may be too advanced for humane treatment. A float test (placing the egg in water) can help determine incubation age — eggs that float have been incubated beyond the humane threshold and should be returned to the nest.

Habitat Modification – Making Your Property Less Attractive

Canada geese are drawn to properties that offer open sight lines, short grass, and easy access to water. By modifying these features, you can significantly reduce the appeal of your property. These steps require no permit.

Lawn and Vegetation

- Let your grass grow longer – geese prefer tender, short shoots
- Reduce or stop fertilizing and watering your lawn
- Replace sections of lawn with garden beds, native plantings, or ground cover
- Allow areas near water to naturalize with tall grasses and wildflowers

Shoreline and Water Access

- Plant dense shrubs, tall grasses, or wildflowers along shorelines
- Install low fences or rock walls between water and lawn
- Create continuous barriers of vegetation geese cannot easily walk through
- Make shoreline plantings thick enough to discourage nesting

Sight Lines

Geese prefer open areas where they can spot predators. Adding hedges, shrub clusters, or berms near open grassy areas makes geese feel less secure and less likely to stay.

Aversion Techniques – No Permit Required

These non-harmful techniques can be used to discourage geese from settling. They work best when applied early (February–March) before geese establish territories. Combine multiple methods and vary them frequently.

Effective Techniques

- Sudden, startling noises (clapping, air horns, banging pots)
- Motion-activated deterrents (air bursts, sprinklers)
- Flashing or rotating strobe lights at dusk and dawn
- Coyote or dog decoys moved frequently
- Recorded goose distress calls

What Does Not Work Long-Term

Geese quickly ignore static, non-threatening objects:

- Stationary plastic owls, inflatable snakes, or scarecrows
- Floating alligator heads or dead-goose decoys
- Flags, balloons, and ultrasonic devices

Timing matters: Geese are extremely reluctant to move once they begin moulting in early June. Start deterrence in February when geese first arrive.

Stop Feeding Geese

One of the most important things you can do is stop feeding Canada geese and encourage others to do the same. Geese will stay longer and in greater numbers wherever food is easy to find.

Human foods such as bread are nutritionally poor and can cause serious health problems in waterfowl, including a permanent wing deformity known as angel wing. Canada geese are fully capable of finding their own food.

Feeding wildlife is prohibited under the City of Brampton's Parks By-law. Clean up spilled birdseed, secure garbage bins, and do not leave food scraps outdoors.

Understanding the Seasonal Goose Cycle

Knowing when geese are doing what helps you time your efforts effectively.

Season	What's Happening
February – March	Geese arrive and scout nesting sites. Best time to begin deterrence and to have your CWS permit in hand.
Mid-March – Early May	Breeding and nesting. Geese lay eggs. Nests and eggs cannot be disturbed without a permit. Egg addling must occur within 14 days of incubation.
Early May – Late July	Goslings hatch and are raised. Adults moult (June–July) and cannot fly for about six weeks. Do not chase flightless geese.
Late July – November	Geese regain flight and forage in flocks. Aversion techniques can resume.
November – December	Fall migration. Many depart, though some remain year-round in southern Ontario.

When to Contact Us

City of Brampton Animal Services is here to help with education, site assessments, and guidance. Contact us if:

- You are unsure whether an action requires a permit
- You would like advice on habitat modifications or aversion techniques
- You have found an injured goose
- Geese are displaying aggressive behaviour in a public area
- You would like educational materials for your neighbourhood

Remember: For activities that require a permit (egg addling, nest removal, goose relocation), apply for a Damage or Danger Permit through the Canadian Wildlife Service and then engage a licensed wildlife management company to carry out the work.

Key Contacts

City of Brampton Animal Services

Phone: 311 (within Brampton) or (905) 874-2000

Website: brampton.ca

Canadian Wildlife Service – Ontario Region (Permits)

Address: 335 River Road, Ottawa, ON K1V 1C7

Phone: (613) 990-8355 | Email: wildlifeontario@ec.gc.ca

Permit application forms: canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/migratory-bird-permits/application-forms.html

Managing Conflicts with Migratory Birds (Best Practices)

canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/migratory-bird-conservation/managing-conflicts.html