

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FOSTER CITY CANADA GOOSE POPULATION MANAGEMENT



Why is the City looking to control the Canada Goose population?

Consistent growth in the local Canada Goose population is posing potential public health hazards to both Foster City residents and visitors of our parks and waterways. Lagoon water quality testing regularly shows high e.coli and bacteria levels partly attributed to high concentrations of goose droppings among other factors, that have resulted in mandatory beach closures. For example, Heal the Bay identified three Foster City beaches among the top 10 most polluted in California. Additionally, constant exposure to droppings in parks and open spaces across Foster City is unsanitary and unhealthy.

Why does Foster City have such a large goose population?

The Canada Goose is a migratory bird that has taken permanent residence in and around Foster City. The City's parks are the ideal habitat for the birds, especially during molting season, which is when the birds shed their feathers and cannot fly. Although the birds pose an ongoing issue, their presence is a bigger nuisance during their molting season from early June through August. It is during this time that increased populations tend to gather at the City's parks and beaches, resulting in higher concentrations of droppings at the parks and beaches. In the parks, the birds have a constant food source, easy access to fresh water, and no predators. This issue is not unique to Foster City. The region is experiencing growth in the Canada Goose population, although Foster City has been the most impacted.

What can I do to help address the issue?

When visiting parks, make sure to not leave behind food or litter that could attract wildlife. Additionally, do not feed wild animals. And share your thoughts and perspectives on the issue as well. All input is welcomed and can be provided by sending an email to geese@fostercity.org.

What has the City done already to address this issue?

The City has used a variety of nonlethal measures as deterrents including dog hazing, egg adding, strobe lights, fogging, fencing, site aversion, displacement, and more. These efforts have been limited in their success due to tolerance and adaptation, as the population has almost doubled from 181 in 2020 to 323 in 2021, with indications that figure will tick higher in 2022. Nonetheless, the City remains committed to utilizing all nonlethal deterrents as an ongoing part of its population management plan. And staff continues to explore new options and welcomes suggestions regarding potential nonlethal measures which could be considered.

Why not just clean up after the geese?

Foster City parks are power washed regularly during the molting season when many geese are present to ensure a suitable level of cleanliness. But power washing is only a temporary solution for assuring the sanitation and attractiveness of local open spaces which does not address the source of the issue. Any power washing in Foster City parks is done using reclaimed water, as the City is committed to conserving water through the ongoing drought. Additionally, power washing frequency may be reduced as water run-off from power washing can enter the lagoon which would lead to increased concentrations of bacteria from goose droppings. This will likely lead to increased complaints regarding the volume of droppings in and around walkways and parks.

What are the next steps?

With an obligation to maintain healthy waterways and inviting parks, Foster City is considering the lethal removal of a limited number of geese. The lethal option would complement other ongoing nonlethal measures and be applied selectively as a means of population control, not extermination. No action or final decision on the matter has been made, other than the direction to acquire the necessary permits should the City move forward with lethal removal.