

Battle Of The Gulls - A Friendly Attack

Why Discourage Gulls?

Landing stations, where fish are transferred off boats, and fish plants often attract sea gulls. Unfortunately, gull faeces can contaminate raw fish and shellfish. This can occur through direct contamination of fish while they are being sorted and transported or indirectly when gull faeces are carried into a seafood plant on foot wear, equipment or supplies.

Sea gulls naturally carry illness-causing bacteria such as *salmonella* or *Listeria monocytogenes*. Keeping sea gulls away from areas where seafood is transported or processed will help prevent seafood contamination by these bacteria.

Plan of Attack

The first line of defence should be to eliminate the reason why the gulls are present. Gulls frequent an area primarily to eat. A policy of keeping the outside areas clean and ensuring that offal containers are tightly covered will probably eliminate their presence. If gulls still gather, for reasons beyond your control, other steps may be taken.

Previous attempts to control gulls by scaring them with noisemakers, streamers, rockets or recorded distress calls tend to be expensive and effective for only short periods of time.

A technique of setting up overhead lines takes advantage of the seagulls landing pattern. As they descend in a circular pattern, the diameter of the circle decreases as they approach ground level.

By strategically placing wires over a specific site, the gulls' landing pattern is apparently disturbed - causing the gulls to avoid attempting to land in the wire covered area. The few gulls that enter a protected area do so by walking into the area.

Most networks use monofilament fishing line or stainless steel wire. Monofilament lines range from 40 - 100 pound test and stainless steel wires range from 0.01 to 0.16 inches in diameter (9 - 32 gauge). Wires can be

attached to existing buildings or fences or to poles around the area needing protection.

Advantages of monofilament line are lower cost, no tendency to kink, and ease of installation. Disadvantages include deterioration from exposure to sunlight and possible breakage if gulls fly into the lines.

Implementing a Control System

Although line configurations can and do vary, the following guidelines are from seafood plants that had success in controlling gulls. The facilities used either monofilament line or stainless steel wire in parallel lines placed about 2 feet above the roof and 10-15 feet apart. By also stringing lines about 1 foot out from roof edges, gulls were prevented from landing on roof edges. Lines over open areas were similarly spaced (lines are sometimes criss-crossed) and placed between 10-30 feet above the ground.

This technique, with varying configurations, has also been used successfully at hatcheries, landfills and pool areas.

Fish Hatchery Raceways: 50 pound test monofilament line in parallel lines 8 inches above water and 16 inches apart.

Landfills: 100 pound test mono-filament line or .016 - .16 inch diameter wire in parallel line 33 - 79 feet above ground and 10 - 100 feet apart.

Pools: 0.01 - 0.08 inch diameter wire or monofilament line in criss-crossed lines 10 - 33 feet above ground.

***For further information please contact your
Fish Safety Officer 604.707.2458, or your
local Health Authority***

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