

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PROGRAM TO REDUCE DAMAGE FROM EUROPEAN STARLINGS AT DAIRIES USING DRC-1339

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Abstract: In the winter in Michigan, European starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) congregate, sometimes in large numbers, at dairies to feed on the high energy components of cattle feed. Damage is incurred not only with the extensive consumption of the feed but also in a corresponding loss in milk production. Starlings are also suspected in the spread of diseases harmful to cattle. Effective control of starlings in these situations is limited to DRC-1339 which has been registered for this use for many years. However, it was rarely used, largely under the perception that effective control was difficult to achieve. In 1999, WS-MI launched a pilot project to see if the use of DRC-1339 could be re-invented for use on a broad scale. Foremost among the tasks of the pilot project was to identify a bait that was universally accepted by starlings, readily available in large quantities and compatible with DRC-1339. The answer to this search was found in a high-fat additive to cattle feed. This key discovery allowed for considerable expansion of this program which presented new challenges for business practices, personnel, logistics and public affairs. The answers to these challenges allowed WS-MI to conduct starling damage control on an unprecedented scale with a high degree success. Since the initiation of the pilot project, 219 dairies have been treated with DRC-1339 in which 181 farms (83%) have seen starlings reduced by 75% or more.

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