

Oyster Bay to deploy more dogs to chase away geese at town parks



Amanda Ackerly, owner of Haulin' Auss Geese Control with Yeti, one of the Australian Shepherds she uses to get the job done, on Thursday at John J. Burns Park in Massapequa Park. Credit: Newsday/Alejandra Villa Loarca

By Joseph Ostapiuk

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The Town of Oyster Bay has hired an outside vendor to deploy up to six dogs to help shoo away Canada geese and addle the fowl's eggs to manage the pesky population.

For years, Oyster Bay had town employees and trained dogs to handle geese control across its parks and properties. But its last trained border collie, Skye, died last year at the age of 16, according to the town. Haulin' Auss Geese Control, a Ronkonkoma-based company, will take over the effort, officials said.

Amanda Ackerly, the owner of Haulin' Auss Geese Control, said the company has six trained Australian Shepherds and began working for the town under an emergency contract this spring.

"There are no natural predators here on Long Island," Ackerly said. "The population has grown out of control."

Earlier this month, the town board passed a resolution authorizing the company to work through 2027. The contract is not to exceed \$160,000 per year.

"The Town's geese control program protects the health and safety of our residents while also helping to preserve local ecosystems and prevent damage to our parks," Marta Kane, an Oyster Bay spokeswoman, said.

The Town of Hempstead uses Geese Chasers Long Island to deter geese at 16 properties, including parks, said Brian Devine, a town spokesman.

North Hempstead has a contractor to handle egg oiling and another that deploys dogs to scare geese from town properties, park commissioner Kelly Gillen said. The town has also piloted a new program which uses lights to deter geese from some locations.

Ackerly said her team will patrol some parks, including John J. Burns Park in Massapequa, several times a day. She said the dogs are trained not to attack the geese.

In addition to running daily patrols, the dogs will be tasked with working large outdoor spaces on the eve of major community events.

Haulin' Auss Geese Control will also coat certain goose eggs at the early stage of development with corn oil, which prevents them from hatching. Ackerly said the company tests to make sure the egg is not in an advanced stage of development before employing the technique.

The current geese population in New York is about 200,000, according to the state Department of Environmental Conservation. The figure is far higher than what the agency considers to be an acceptable total — about 85,000.

A variety of techniques are effective at deterring Canada geese, according to the DEC, including the use of dogs to scare them away and adequate fencing around park properties during the summer molting period. Several are ineffective, including the use of real or fake swans; bird distress calls; as well as scarecrows and dead goose decoys.

The geese are drawn to areas where there are few natural predators, experts have said. The geese are generally not frightened by people and have grown accustomed to some of the scaring techniques, according to the DEC.

A single goose can produce over a pound of droppings a day, creating issues for park goers as well as concerns about beaches and drinking water, officials said.

"It's really bad for the environment," Ackerly said. "You get algae blooms and such, and it has a lot to do with them."



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