

## Overview - Features and Benefits

### FEATURED ARTICLE PPC article – Autumn 2008

Minimum visibility bird protection effective against all species at all infestation pressures in almost any location over an extended lifetime. No, it's not a pipedream. It may have been impossible to achieve in the UK up to now, but the arrival of the first electric system proven not to harm birds – Avishock – opens up a whole world of new urban bird management options alongside traditional spikes and nets.

“Strictly speaking it's not bird proofing because it doesn't constitute a physical barrier,” explained national bird management specialist, Grahame Turner of behaviour-led pest control experts, Sorex at an industry training day ahead of the system's official launch at this year's Pest Tech.

“Equally, it's not a scaring device in the conventional sense of visual or audio deterrents. Instead, it modifies the behaviour of urban birds by touch, deterring them from loafing, roosting or nesting.

“Electric systems have been successfully employed in many parts of the world for a number of years,” Grahame Turner pointed out. “Here in the UK, however, their use has been seriously restricted for fear of contravening the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act or the more recent 2006 Animal Welfare Act through causing 'bodily injury' or 'unnecessary suffering' to wild birds.

“We didn't believe the legislation was an insurmountable problem, though. So we took-up the issue with DEFRA and established that if we could prove our system didn't harm wild birds it would be legally acceptable. Which is exactly what we have been able to do through extensive, independent trials with pigeons and sparrows under carefully controlled conditions at the Government's own Central Science Laboratories (CSL).”

Involving detailed behaviour monitoring and veterinary checks, the CSL testing concluded there is no evidence AviShock will cause bodily injury to pigeons, sparrows or birds with similar characteristics. This is supported by the extensive portfolio of research data and overseas experience the development team has assembled with their US manufacturing partners.

Armed with this evidence, Sorex is confident the system complies with all the relevant legislation, enabling it to be launched as the only electric system proven to meet UK legal requirements. As such, it has been received positively by Natural England, the Scottish Government, Welsh Assembly, Northern Ireland Office, RSPB, RSPCA and SSPCA as well as by pest control experts across the country.



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“While proving it doesn’t harm them, the CSL trials also showed how effective Avishock can be at deterring birds,” added Grahame Turner. “Both the pigeons and sparrows were found to prefer the food source – only accessible from a perch protected by the system – over an alternative provided elsewhere in their pens. Yet, while they spent an average of 18.0 and 14.5 seconds respectively on the perch before it was turned on, this was cut to just 1.0 second when it was operational.

“Interestingly, one sparrow receiving a shock and departing rapidly from the ledge was sufficient to make the whole flock take wing. And the pigeons showed a marked reluctance to re-visit the ledge for the remaining 70 hours of the trial during which the track was left off, despite the temptation of their preferred food. This underlines the system’s value in flock deterrence through aversion as well as instinctive behaviour.”

Avishock is based on lengths of twin, braided stainless steel conductors set in an extruded PVC base which can be glued along almost any surface and is flexible enough to accommodate undulations and curves.

Just 6 mm high and available in several building-toned colours, the track is hardly noticeable at close quarters and almost invisible at any distance. It is easily cut to length and a range of purpose-built click-on connectors and jumpers allow runs to accommodate a wide variety of building features.

Operating in much the same way as livestock electric fencing, weatherproof charger units –capable of serving up to 300 metres of track – send pulses of high voltage, low current electricity down the conductors, shocking birds whenever they land on the track and complete the circuit.

“The system is particularly valuable wherever visibility is a major concern,” stressed Grahame Turner. “This makes it the product of choice for listed buildings or other high profile sites. The fact that a single length of well-sited track can often protect the same width of ledge as multiple rows of spikes or wire makes it ideal for a wide range of parapets, roof peaks, edges and beams. And it is second-to-none in protecting signs and other awkward objects previously difficult or impossible to proof.

“Its relative expense means spikes and nets will continue to be the preferred solution for many less sensitive areas and applications, though,” he added. “Unlike physical proofing measures, Avishock also requires a mains power source, should not be operated where it could cause people to fall if startled, and can profit from quarterly inspection to ensure it continues to operate at peak efficiency.”



## **VIEWS FROM THE PEST CONTROL INDUSTRY**

“A new non-physical bird management system which combines effectiveness with the assurance of no bodily injury. I can see lots of applications for it.”

**Paul Butt, Natural England**

“Thank heavens we now have a low visibility system we can be confident of recommending to customers for high value, architecturally sensitive buildings and locations.”

**Iain Turner, Barretine**

“It’s great to see new cutting-edge technology coming into our industry allowing members to solve urban bird problems for which they previously had few acceptable answers.”

**Oliver Madge, BPCA**

“Avishock is a very valuable addition to our bird proofing armoury. Particularly for buildings where spikes or nets are unacceptable on aesthetic or conservation grounds.”

**Paul Hoyes, Killgerm**

“We’re already seeing keen interest in the system from clients working on a major project with Manchester City Council despite costs significantly higher than traditional spikes.”

**Steve Mills, Pestproof Ltd**

“Architects will love Avishock. It meets their desire for effective and unobtrusive edge protection against all bird problems even better than bird wire in most situations.”

**Ian Cain, NBC Scotland**