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Intelligent ScareCrow helps Londoners stay Fox Free

VICTORIA, BC (October 4, 2006) London's urban fox population -- estimated at more than 10,000 -- is causing problems for homeowners and businesses that prefer to keep their premises fox free. A product of the city's post-war expansion into the rural suburbs in the 1930s, urbanized red foxes have adapted to life on the outskirts, and as their rural habitat continues to shrink, have spread into the centre of London to take up residence throughout the city, including the grounds at Buckingham Palace, City Hall, Downing Street, and St. Paul's Cathedral. Frustrated by damaged gardens and sleepless nights punctuated by the alarming "vixen's scream" mating call, residents are increasingly turning to firearm equipped pest-control services in an attempt to reduce the fox population within their areas. But an alternative method of "humane wildlife deterrence" is also experiencing considerable success — thanks in part to the efforts of animal welfare consultant John Bryant, and a motion-activated sprinkler developed for the garden industry by Canadian manufacturer Contech Electronics.

Bryant runs Humane Urban Wildlife Deterrence (www.jbryant.co.uk), a service that helps homeowners, schools, hospitals and businesses deter foxes without harming the creatures. Among the tools Bryant recommends is the ScareCrow® motion-activated sprinkler from Contech Electronics (www.contech-inc.com). Used extensively by gardeners to protect plants and ponds from cats, raccoons, deer and heron, the ScareCrow detects animals as they approach and deters them with a startling spray of water. Bryant explains that this type of harmless, automatic deterrent can play an important role in "persuading" foxes to avoid potential trouble spots.

“The key is knowledge of the species and its role in the environment, recognising what foxes like and don’t like, and removing or defending attractions -- particularly food or food packaging,” said Bryant. “Combining knowledge of the animal’s biology and ecology with carefully targeted deterrents and repellent devices usually puts an end to the particular nuisance without harming the culprit.”

Bryant cites a University of Bristol study that found removing foxes from an area merely creates a vacancy for other foxes, and newly vacant territories are rapidly filled by neighbouring foxes in as little as three days. According to the London Wildlife Trust (www.wildlondon.org.uk), the number of urban foxes remains about the same from year to year, despite approximately 60% of the population dying each year (with nearly half of these deaths due to car accidents).

“People sometimes express concern about ‘too many’ foxes in an area, but the population — like that of all carnivores — is self regulating and limited by the amount of food and territory available,” explained Bryant. “After a certain point, cubs born simply replace the number of adults lost since the previous breeding season. The key is to adjust your environment so the creatures learn to avoid that particular part of their territory,” added Bryant. “Deterrence is an affordable, effective and humane solution.”

For more on John Bryant’s Humane Urban Wildlife Deterrence organization, visit www.jbryant.co.uk.

For more on the ScareCrow motion-activated sprinkler, visit www.contech-inc.com/products/scarecrow, or contact info@contech-inc.com.

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About Contech Electronics

Established in 1987, Contech Electronics is a designer and provider of advanced animal training, control and wellness products for pet owners and gardeners around the world. Safe and effective solutions such as the ScareCrow® motion-activated sprinkler continue to reinforce the company’s reputation as a leading innovator in the pet and garden industries. For more information, visit www.contech-inc.com