



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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DIRECTIONS FOR RIDDING
CORNFIELDS OF PINYON JAYS

The pinyon jay, a relative of the ordinary crow, native to the Rocky Mountain region and most plentiful in Utah and Colorado, annually causes great damage to corn and wheat crops. Because of the frequent complaints of depredations by this bird, known variously as squawker, pinyon squawker, blue crow, or cedarbird, the Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture has developed effective means for combating the bird in cornfields and is at work on methods to be used where it feeds on wheat.

These marauding jays usually travel in flocks of from 500 to 1,500; upon first entering a cornfield, they are likely to scatter, but in a few days they settle down to a definite part of the field and return to that same place again and again. Corn is sometimes slightly damaged by them in the roasting-ear stage, but they seldom do serious damage until it is ripe enough to be shelled off readily.

Poisoning should not begin until a definite feeding area has been established by the birds. Pinyon jays are not protected by either Federal or State laws, but in poisoning them care should be taken to comply with State and local regulations for the use of poisoned baits. The poison recommended by the department is strychnine alkaloid made into a paste with starch and applied as a thin coating on dry shelled corn. It is made in the proportions of 5 quarts of corn to 1/4 ounce of strychnine alkaloid, and 1/2 pint of starch paste. The paste is made by mixing a teaspoonful of ordinary laundry starch

with a tablespoonful of cold water and stirring well as the half pint of hot water is added. This makes a thin paste. To the strychnine a like bulk of paste is added and mixed well, then the rest of the paste is added and stirred well. The poison is poured over the corn in a box or tub and the mass mixed until each kernel has a thin coating. After the corn is well dried it is ready for use. It can not be used in rainy weather.

The poisoned grain is best spread by dropping it through the fingers while walking slowly between the rows. One handful will cover about 40 linear feet and, except in small fields, poison in every other row is sufficient. In most cases 5 to 10 quarts will cover the damaged section. Bait thus spread will kill the maximum number of pinyon jays and the minimum of other birds. It will not harm chickens or turkeys, and other farm stock will not pick up enough to get a fatal dose.

A circular giving full directions for poisoning pinyon jays in cornfields may be obtained free from the Department of Agriculture at Washington, D.C.

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