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Wild-Goose Chaser

In a game of man vs. wild, David Marcks Makes sure the geese are the losers.

By Jason Daley | [Entrepreneur Magazine - September 2009](#)

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Any business with an unfortunate ZIP code knows the pain of a Canada goose infestation. The geese--and their droppings--can cover lawns, parking lots, sidewalks, customers' shoes, and even cars. But David Marcks' Geese Police uses trained border collies to chase geese off golf courses, colleges, business campuses and residences. After 20 years, Marcks has licensed 11 franchises in nine states, with two more ready to open this year. And he still manages the New Jersey/New York City branch, which runs 45 border collies on 385 properties--including Central Park.



David Marcks
 Photo © David Johnson

How does a golf course superintendent become a goose gooser?

I tried sprays, pyrotechnics, flags, fences, everything to get rid of the geese on my golf course. Then one day, I was standing in a bookstore and saw a picture of a border collie. I remembered a dog that used to run all these cows and bulls at a Black Angus farm I worked on. I figured if a dog could move a 2,000-pound cow, it could move a goose. I bought my first dog, Tac. After six weeks, the geese were off my course, but Tac didn't have anything to do. So I took her to a neighboring course to chase geese, then another superintendent asked about her. I started waking up early to run her, and the business went from there.

Why franchise? Why don't people just get a dog and set up on their own?

I created this business and industry. Workers' comp doesn't know where to lump us--neither do insurance and zoning. I had to figure out and create every damn thing. Different states have different regulations, leash laws and bird protections. You can't just buy a dog and go into business. I've worked with the best trainers for the last 20 years. When franchisees open, they get two dogs from me. Before anyone drives around with my name on their truck, they need a dog that I know works.

What type of person wants to chase geese away for a living?

You have to like the great outdoors. On beautiful days, our office is great, but you're also out in the wind, the heat, bugs, hail, ticks, snakes--you name it. It's a seven-day-a-week, 365-day-a-year business. But the best part is your co-workers; dogs are easier to deal with than people.

How's goose removal in the recession?

We're doing all right. When one of our clients went bankrupt, they canceled service. A few weeks later, they called back; they needed us to keep the geese away just so they could show their empty buildings. It's cheaper for companies to pay us than have a custodian blow goose droppings off the sidewalks and parking lot every morning.

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