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NOVEMBER ELECTIONS: DOVE-HUNTING ADS CLOUD THE ISSUE

Depending on which ad you've seen, a vote in support of Issue 1 on Nov. 3 could mean the end of life-saving medical research on animals, the demise of the hamburger and steak industry and the destruction of American family life as we know it.

If you've read the initiative, you know Issue 1 is a proposal to ban the hunting of mourning doves.

Trouble is, according to Kathy Hessler, a visiting professor at the University of Dayton School of Law and an expert in animal rights law, few voters will know what the issue is about when they hit the voting stands, thanks to a campaign against the measure that seems to talk about everything but the hunting of mourning doves.

"I think you can understand why they do it," said Hessler. "They can't come out and say 'let us kill these cute little doves' and get a lot of support for it. But it's a really important issue to get out there. The fact that the ads against the measure are so misleading doesn't give people the chance to really decide for themselves."

Hessler said dove hunting in Ohio had been illegal, with the exception of a brief period in 1975, for about 100 years. When hunters managed to quash the ban on dove hunting a few years ago, animal rights activists began to speak out. A massive statewide signature drive put a proposal to ban dove hunting on this year's ballot, but that public support may wane in the face of the wealthy, well-organized hunters' lobby against the measure.

"I think the campaign for the hunters is pretty powerful for people who are uninformed," said Hessler. "(Issue 1) sounds dreadful in their ads, and supporters of the measure don't have the money to really defend it. To the extent that people are unaware of the issues, I think the hunters will be successful."

"But either way," Hessler adds, "I don't think the issue will go away after the vote."

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