



Rainbow lorikeet management options

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This Pestnote provides information about management of rainbow lorikeets (*Trichoglossus haematodus*) to reduce the damage they often cause in southern Western Australia. It also documents the steps being taken by the Western Australian Government to facilitate management of the lorikeet problem and what members of the public and fruit growers can do.

(Control options described in this Pestnote have been effective in addressing bird problems in South Australia. These options have not been tested on rainbow lorikeets in Western Australia and may require modification to suit local conditions.)



Rainbow lorikeet damaging apples (I. Temby).

Why manage rainbow lorikeets?

In Perth, rainbow lorikeets cause a variety of problems including:

- damage to backyard fruit crops;
- fouling of outdoor areas and vehicles with droppings;
- competition with other species for food and nest sites; and
- noise.

In the Swan Valley, lorikeets are causing damage to commercial table and wine grape crops. They have

also been reported damaging fruit in orchards in the Perth hills.

Rainbow lorikeets also pose a potential disease risk to wild and captive parrots because they are carriers of Psittacine beak and feather disease.

What is the legal status of lorikeets?

Under legislation administered by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), rainbow lorikeets in the south-west land division are the subject of an Acclimatised Fauna Notice, which recognises that lorikeets are native birds living in the wild as a result of

being released, escaping or being the offspring of released or escaped birds. The notice also states that lorikeets can be shot on private land in the south-west land division, without the need for a Damage Licence from DEC. The notice requires that no damage is to be caused to trees, and traps can only be used by persons licensed to do so under DEC legislation.

Under legislation administered by the Department of Agriculture and Food (DAFWA), rainbow lorikeets are declared pests in Western Australia, in all areas south of the Kimberley including the Perth metropolitan area. This means that private, municipal and state government landholders are responsible for control of lorikeets on their land.

Illegal to release lorikeets

In the southern parts of the State where lorikeets are declared as pests and do not naturally occur in the wild, no lorikeets, including those captured or rescued, can be legally released back into the wild. Wild lorikeets generally do not make good pets and can spread disease.

Animal welfare

All lorikeet management activities must comply with the *Animal Welfare Act 2002*, which requires that pest animals are handled and killed humanely. Breaches of the State's legislation may be punished by heavy penalties, including jail terms. Only competent persons should undertake these activities. All other persons should seek veterinary or other expert assistance prior to any attempts to kill the birds.

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Who manages lorikeets?

The legal status of the rainbow lorikeet means that government, private landholders, fruit growers and other groups all have a role to play in the management of the bird.

DAFWA and DEC oversee a lorikeet management program that aims to reduce the size of the Perth population substantially over the next few years. The program includes the following actions:

- Seek further funds to manage and reduce the size of the population.
- Estimate the number and distribution of birds in the Perth population.
- Investigate and document the effectiveness of methods for population reduction in the metropolitan area (currently targeting large concentrations of lorikeets at roost and feed sites).



Damage to a car caused by lorikeet droppings (G. Gray).

- Educate the public on the impacts of rainbow lorikeets and the need for control (via letterdrops, newspaper articles, presentations, leaflets and websites).
- Remove rainbow lorikeets that are sighted outside the Perth metropolitan area (each year the government deals with several instances of lorikeets in country areas).
- Investigate and document the effectiveness of methods for damage reduction (including the use of feeding stations, traps, various chemical methods and DNA studies).

DAFWA and DEC are also assisting commercial fruit producers in their local management of rainbow lorikeets by providing advice, demonstrating control techniques, raising awareness of lorikeet problems and management options in affected areas, and providing matching funding for action groups known as Declared Species Groups.

Integrated efforts lead to effective management

Managing the impacts of rainbow lorikeets at a local level is difficult and expensive. There is no simple solution

unless anti-bird netting is used. Using a number of techniques in conjunction with neighbours is likely to be more effective than relying on any one technique at a single location. An example would be the shooting of some birds combined with using a variety of scaring devices.

It is important to note that, unlike other parrots, lorikeets can travel widely in search of food, so some of the management options used for other parrots may not be as effective.

Points to help reduce crop damage

- Consider whether the benefits of taking action (to decrease damage) will outweigh the cost and effort. Trials have shown that for other parrot species sometimes the most cost-effective measure is to do nothing, especially for low-value crops.
 - Adequate resources (money, labour and equipment) should be set aside to deal with damage problems.
 - Co-operation among neighbours may assist in the efficient and effective use of management options, especially in areas where there are a number of small holdings.
 - Every situation is different. Management combinations that work at one location may not work at another. Also, not all bird species react the same way to a particular option.
 - Instant reduction in damage is unlikely. Management needs to be exercised throughout the whole time when damage occurs, otherwise the effects will be short-lived.
 - Scarers or shooting should be used occasionally throughout the year to maintain a degree of wariness in the birds and convince them that the area is not safe for feeding.
- Crops should be regularly checked for signs of damage. Early action can then be taken before the birds become reliant on the crop for food or develop a habit of coming to the crop.
- It is important that the birds associate human activity with danger. They soon lose their fear of humans if not harassed with real danger (or a good simulation of danger).
- Management efforts should be random with respect to the time at which they occur, the type of devices and vehicles used, and the people involved. This reduces the opportunity for birds to get used to a routine and become complacent about particular devices, vehicles, or people. For example, setting and forgetting scaring devices is much less likely to be effective than more strategic, non-repetitive use.
- If there are no alternative food sources (like flowering plants or a sacrificed part of the crop) located where the birds can feed undisturbed, it may be difficult to scare birds from the main crop. They may be reliant on the crop for food and return to it.
- Assessment of the level of damage and the effectiveness of management programs might indicate that next season resources could be better used elsewhere.



Rainbow lorikeet damage to table grapes in the Swan Valley (G. Gray).

What members of the public can do

To assist in the collection of information on the distribution and negative behaviour of rainbow lorikeets, please report to DAFWA when birds are first seen in your area, when they start to become a nuisance, the types of damage they are causing and any roosting or intensive feeding sites you observe. (Roosting sites can only be confirmed if birds are still present in trees after dark.)

Even if you are not being directly affected by lorikeets, be supportive of local businesses in your area that are affected and mindful of the responsibilities placed on all landholders to manage the birds.

What fruit growers can do

Be aware of your legislative responsibilities to manage lorikeets and the fact there are management options available.

To assist the local co-ordination of management activities, it is important that you report lorikeets on your properties when they are first seen and when they are damaging crops.

If you are planning to manage lorikeets on your property, please be sensitive to your neighbours and their lifestyles.

Providing your neighbours with copies of this Pestnote and other publications and discussing the pros and cons of various management options are good first steps that may help your neighbours to understand the need for what are sometimes noisy and visually-unpleasant management options.

Keeping lorikeets as pets

Many lorikeets are kept as pets in Western Australia. Several lorikeets with metal bands on their legs, showing they were being kept as pets, have been recovered from the wild in Perth and elsewhere in the south-west. To guard against escapes and releases, lorikeets should be maintained in secure double-door aviaries under DEC licence. Unwanted birds should be surrendered, not released to the wild.

Further information

Contact any office of the Department of Agriculture and Food on Freecall 1800 084 881 or email info@agric.wa.gov.au. For additional publications on rainbow lorikeets and parrots, visit the Department websites: www.agric.wa.gov.au or www.dec.wa.gov.au



Aviary suitable for keeping rainbow lorikeets, with double-door security (M. Massam).

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Summary of rainbow lorikeet management options

Option	When and where used	Benefits	Costs and other considerations
Anti-bird netting	Enclose crops with temporary or permanent netting. Available from a number of specialist companies as well as rural and hardware suppliers.	Effective, long term, and humane when properly installed.	High initial capital outlay and not economic for protection of low-value crops. May obstruct farming practices and require maintenance unless properly designed. There can be animal welfare issues with loosely applied nets or nets with large mesh-size, as birds can be entangled. Reduces air movement so may increase crop disease problems. Also can exclude beneficial predators, and increase insect damage. Could move birds to other types of crops like wine grapes.
Scaring	Various devices (e.g. bio-acoustic sounds, laser lights, fire hoses) used in combination at feeding, loafing and roosting sites. To be effective, may also require alternative foods at another location that the birds can move to, as well as use of firearms.	Humane and safer in built-up areas.	Often costly as probably necessary to apply continually, with devices being rotated to be effective. Scarers may breach noise regulations and bird-scaring ammunition like Bird Frite® can be a minor fire risk during dry periods. Reported to be ineffective on some properties in the Swan Valley.
Alternative foods	Alternative flowering or fruiting plants attractive to lorikeets are placed or planted away from the crop while scaring continues only at the crop. A variation is to sacrifice a corner of the crop to the birds where they are left undisturbed.	In tree plantations, alternative foods are somewhat effective on ringneck parrots, but effectiveness against lorikeets is currently unknown.	Alternative foods must always be available during the damage season or birds could shift back to the crop. Alternative foods may attract birds to the area in the first place.
Cover or remove vehicles or other items	Roost or food trees can usually be identified by the noise the birds make. Vehicles or items beneath can be covered or moved to avoid fouling.	Low-cost alternative.	When removal is not possible, a cover may be an option.
Shooting	Firearms must be licensed. Use must be in accordance with the Firearms Act 1973. Suggested firearms for use only at close range include: • Air Rifle (0.17, 0.22). • Rifle (0.22), Z Long (29 grains) ammunition. • Shotgun (0.410), shot size 6-9; (12 gauge), shot size 6, 8.	Humane if properly carried out. Effective when used intensively to reduce numbers. Trains birds to associate humans with real danger.	Use in built-up areas or on very small farms requires great attention to safety and animal welfare issues. Make arrangements with local police and inform the local shire beforehand to avoid problems. Must be applied intensively. May not be effective in scaring birds. Shot birds may be replaced by another flock that finds the crop.
Live trapping	Illegal without a licence from DEC. Attractants may include live lure birds or food (e.g. nectar or fruit), possibly in locations where lorikeets are already feeding.	May remove birds causing damage at the critical time.	Euthanasia can only be applied by experienced operators. Traps must have shelter, food and water and be checked regularly so that lure birds are cared for and trapped birds are removed. Effective trap designs and attractants are not yet available.
Mistnets	Illegal without a licence from DEC. Only experienced operators can be licensed.	May remove birds causing damage at the critical time.	Can only be used effectively where bird flight paths are known and are at heights of less than approximately 3 m. High risk of injury to birds and operators when used by unlicensed operators. Euthanasia can only be applied by experienced operators.
Illegal methods			
Poisoning	Illegal under DEC and animal welfare legislation.	-	Not selective and so may result in the death of native animals, birds and pets. Crop contamination threatens markets.
Trapping and export/selling of birds	Illegal under DEC, animal welfare and Australian Government legislation and international treaty.	-	Wild-caught adult birds do not humanise, are not suitable as pets and would almost certainly not be suitable for export.
Capture and translocation	Illegal under DAFWA, DEC and animal welfare legislation.	-	Translocated birds must attempt to establish themselves in a new environment. This moves the problem to a new location.