



No.15

## Options for corella, galah and cockatoo control

### Damage control

Damage caused by cockatoos can be reduced using the techniques explained in this note. For more information on the biology and control of specific cockatoo species, refer to the fauna notes listed under further reading.

### Legislation

Some cockatoos are declared pests of agriculture under the provisions of the *Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act 1976*, administered by the Western Australian Department of Agriculture and Food. This declaration allows for the approval and implementation of a management program in specific areas of the state, in accordance with the provisions made under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*.

As native species, cockatoos are protected under provisions of the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, administered by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC). Under this Act, except in areas where open seasons have been gazetted, destruction of birds by shooting on private property can only take place with DEC approval (via a damage licence). Destruction should be viewed as a last resort after other control options have been attempted.

Some problem cockatoos require special protection because they are considered to be rare or likely to become extinct. Such species may not be destroyed by any means and even shooting to scare must be carried out under a damage licence from the DEC. Examples include Baudin's cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus baudinii*), Carnaby's cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus latirostris*) and Muir's corella (*Cacatua pastinator pastinator*).

### Effective cockatoo damage control

Management of cockatoo damage requires a strategic approach that takes the individual circumstances of each problem into account. Thus, it is not possible to set down a generic program for all pest management problems and management plans must be prepared on a case by case basis.

More information and guidelines on how to develop and implement a vertebrate pest management program using these guidelines can be found at the Bureau of Rural Sciences website on agricultural pests and feral animals.

### Reducing the potential for damage

- Enquire with neighbours before planting to determine if birds are present or if there is a history of damage.
- Plant crops in large blocks with smaller edge to area ratio as these are less likely to be damaged. This is because cockatoos tend to damage outside rows first and most severely.
- Plant crops away from native vegetation, as cockatoos rely on it for nest and roost sites, and the birds' regular flight paths are less likely to be found and damaged. Crops planted away from areas where the birds have fed, for example stubble or silos, are also less likely to be damaged.
- Sow and harvest crops at the same time as neighbours because the birds will be less likely to target one crop.

### Successful damage reduction programs

1. Consider if the benefits of taking action (decreased damage) will outweigh the possibly considerable costs. Trials have shown that sometimes the most cost-effective measure is to do nothing, especially for low-value crops.
2. Set aside adequate resources (money, labour, equipment) to deal with damage problems.
3. Use control combinations that are known to work on cockatoos and in your situation. Every situation is different. Control combinations that work at one location may not work at another.
4. Be persistent. Use scaring devices early and late in the day throughout the damage period when the birds are likely to be feeding in the area. This will increase the time taken before the birds become used to the devices.
5. Combine a number of devices and use them in rotation to maintain variety. This will reduce the chances of the birds becoming used to the devices.
6. Cooperate with neighbours to ensure they use methods that compliment yours.
7. Scare or shoot-to-scare occasionally throughout the year to maintain a degree of wariness in the birds and to indicate that the area is not safe for feeding.

## Options for corella, galah and cockatoo control

8. Regularly check trees for signs of damage. Early action can be taken before the birds become reliant on the crop for food or develop a habit of coming to the crop.
9. Determine an acceptable level of damage. Assess and record losses caused by the cockatoos and monitor how effective the program has been. The costs and benefits of damage control can then be assessed and the program can be modified to achieve better control in the following seasons.
10. Provide hungry birds with a feeding area away from the crop. If alternative feeding areas are not provided, the birds may return to protected paddocks despite other control efforts like scaring and shooting.
11. Provide feed intended for livestock at a time of day that will reduce the time that the feed is exposed to birds (early morning or late afternoon).

## Options for reducing damage caused by cockatoos.

Option	Application	Benefits	Costs
Limiting food	Limit spilt grain, enclose grain stores, feed sheep at dusk and control weeds. Fauna note no. 11. Limiting access to food to reduce bird damage. DEC, Western Australia.	Can reduce bird numbers over time. Can reduce concentrations of birds in the vicinity of farm buildings.	Requires continued attention over a long period to be effective.
Anti-bird netting	Enclose crops with temporary or permanent netting. Fauna note no. 3. Netting to reduce bird damage. DEC, Western Australia.	Effective, long term and humane.	High initial capital outlay. May obstruct farming practices and require maintenance unless properly designed.
Shooting	Only legal method of destruction. Illegal against <u>all</u> black cockatoos and Muir's corella. Fauna note no. 9. Destruction of birds to reduce damage. DEC, Western Australia.	Humane if properly carried out. Useful for control of problem birds/small flocks.	Not suitable in built-up areas or very small farms. Usually targets immature birds, many of which would die anyway.
Scaring	Various devices, most effective when used in combination. Fauna note no. 2. Scaring and repelling birds to reduce damage. DEC, Western Australia.	Humane and safer than shooting in built-up areas. Scaring backed up with shooting can be effective when used intensively.	Often costly. Must be applied intensively. Scarers may breach noise regulations and crackers can be a minor fire risk.
Alternative food	Place far from crop, birds move to undisturbed alternative. Continue scaring at crop. Fauna note no. 13. Decoy feeding – providing alternative food to birds to reduce damage. DEC, Western Australia.	Less expensive than other methods. The method may be effective in diverting some birds from cereals.	Decoy food supply must always be available during the damage season or birds could shift back to the protected crop.
Screening to restrict vision	Install hessian or shade cloth two to 2.5 metres high around areas to be protected (e.g. feedlots, crops, bowling greens).	Low cost solution. Cockatoos like a clear view when feeding and may leave when this is not the case.	Must be combined with other control measures.
Encourage birds of prey	Install perching poles and protect native vegetation which provides nesting sites.	Low cost solution.	Must be combined with other control measures. Anti-coagulants must be used carefully so as not to affect birds of prey.
Trapping and export of live birds	Illegal under federal legislation. Fauna note no. 14. Trapping and export of native animals. DEC, Western Australia.		Wild-caught birds make poor pets and often die in transit. As birds enter the market prices will drop.
Repellents	Use only those registered as bird repellents. Fauna note no. 2. Scaring and repelling birds to reduce damage. DEC, Western Australia.		Do not appear to be effective against birds. Restrictions/prohibitions apply for some products.
Poisoning	Illegal under the <i>Wildlife Conservation Act 1950</i> .		Crop contamination threatens markets. Other non-target species may be affected.

## Further reading

- Fauna note no. 1. Reducing fruit damage by Baudin's cockatoo. DEC, Western Australia.
- Fauna note no. 4. Muir's corella. DEC, Western Australia.
- Fauna note no. 19. Butler's corella. DEC, Western Australia.
- Fauna note no. 20. Little corella. DEC, Western Australia.
- Fauna note no. 21. Galah. DEC, Western Australia.
- [Living with Muir's Corella](#), DEC, Western Australia.
- [Bird Control in Orchards](#). DEC, Western Australia.

## References

Environment and Natural Resources Committee, Victorian Parliament. (1995) Report on problems in Victoria caused by long-billed corellas, sulphur-crested cockatoos and galahs. No. 67 Session 1994/95. Victorian Government Printer.

## Further information

Contact your local DEC office.

See the department's website for the latest information:

[www.dec.wa.gov.au](http://www.dec.wa.gov.au)

Last updated 18 June 2009

### Further Information

Contact your local office of the Department of Environment and Conservation.

See the Department's website for the latest information: [www.dec.wa.gov.au](http://www.dec.wa.gov.au).



Department of  
**Environment and Conservation**

Our environment, our future 

*Disclaimer: This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Western Australia and its officers do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.*