

Management of common (Indian) myna birds

This information sheet provides background information on the RSPCA's position on the management of pest animals in general and specifically on the control of common myna birds (*Acridotheres tristis*) also known as Indian mynas. It also provides guidelines for the humane trapping and killing of common mynas.

Management of pest animals

Many introduced and some native animals are classed as 'pests' because they have a negative impact on the environment or agricultural production. RSPCA Australia recognises that in certain circumstances it is necessary to control populations of these animals in order to reduce or remove their adverse impact.

Where such control measures are considered necessary, RSPCA Australia believes that lethal methods of control should only be sanctioned where no successful, humane non-lethal alternative control method is available.

Any measures taken to reduce or eradicate a specific population of 'pest' animals must recognise that these animals require the same level of consideration for their welfare as that given to domestic and native animals.

Control programs must have the potential to successfully reduce the adverse impact of the target animals. They must be conducted humanely under the direct supervision of the appropriate government authority. They should be target specific, not cause suffering to non-target animals, and should be effectively monitored and audited with resulting data made available for public information.

All control programs should adhere to the eight implementation principles outlined in the discussion paper 'A national approach towards humane vertebrate pest control' which are designed to ensure that control is necessary, effective and humane.

Management of common mynas

Although RSPCA Australia recognises that in certain circumstances it is necessary to control populations of pest animals because of the impact they have, in the case of common mynas, their impact on native plants and animals is not clearly understood. Also, it is yet to be determined if killing mynas has any effect other than reducing local myna populations. Thus, there is not general agreement about the need for culling of common mynas.

We believe that, based on current knowledge about the impact and preferred habitat of common mynas, trapping and killing by community groups should not be encouraged. Rather, in agreement with a number of experts on this issue, efforts to enhance bird diversity in urbanised areas would be better directed to improving the quality of natural habitat.

If, however, trapping and killing is to be conducted, the RSPCA believes that it should only be carried out as part of a government-supervised control program, which includes clear guidelines on humane procedures. We would also encourage that monitoring and assessment of any control programs be undertaken to provide information on any effects of culling on myna bird impacts, not just on myna bird numbers.

Trapping and killing of common mynas

When trapping and killing of mynas is conducted it must be carried out in accordance with nationally endorsed standard operating procedures (SOP's) produced by the NSW Department of Primary Industries and funded by the Australian Government and the Invasive Animals CRC. Prior to

conducting any control activities operators must read and be familiar with the procedures outlined in the following SOPs:

Trapping of pest birds (BIR002)

Available at: http://www.feral.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/BIR002_trapping-pest-birds.pdf

Methods of euthanasia (GEN001)

Available at:

http://www.feral.org.au/wpcontent/uploads/2013/04/GEN001_euthanasia.pdf

Bird traps must be constructed to allow birds to stretch their wings freely and adequate shade must be provided. Traps must also be inspected on a regular basis, preferably daily. If lure (or decoy) birds are used they must be provided with adequate food, water, shelter and a perch.

Trapped birds must only be killed by humane methods with minimal delay. Based on the SOPs, RSPCA Australia considers the following methods acceptable for killing trapped birds:

- Inhalation of carbon dioxide - only compressed CO₂ gas in cylinders should be used so the inflow to the chamber can be regulated precisely.
- Cervical dislocation - when it is performed by trained and competent operators
- Injection of barbiturate - when administered by an appropriately qualified person e.g. a veterinarian.
- Inhalation of carbon monoxide - compressed bottled gas as well as cooled and scrubbed exhaust from non-vehicular petrol engines without a catalytic converter are acceptable sources of carbon monoxide.

Carbon monoxide sourced from the cooled exhaust of vehicular petrol engines with a catalytic converter (i.e. from cars less than approximately 10 years old) is NOT considered acceptable since levels of carbon monoxide drop off very quickly after the engine has started, and the exhaust is also likely to contain potential irritants. Carbon monoxide sourced from the cooled exhaust of older vehicles without catalytic converters may be acceptable but would still have welfare concerns due to a high variability in the age and condition of engines and presence of contaminants.

More information on the use of carbon monoxide for the euthanasia of trapped birds can be found in the Trapping of pest birds SOP.