



Port Pirie Regional Council

FERAL BIRD MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Introduction

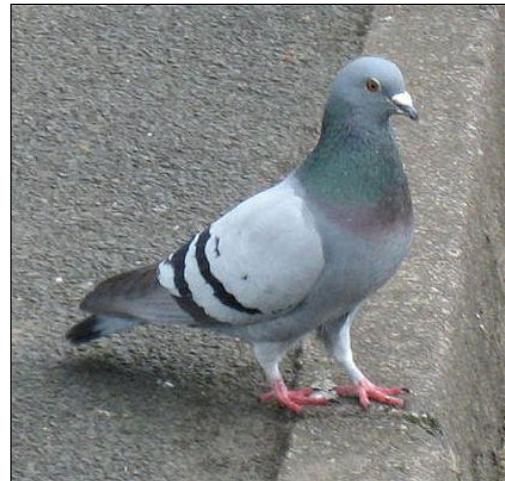
Research from the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States all agree that Feral Bird Management is only possible when the nature and ecology of the particular feral bird species is understood and incorporated into any activities designed to reduce or to eliminate them.

Within the Port Pirie Regional Council area the following species have been identified as feral, or “pest” birds, either periodically or on an on-going basis;

Feral Bird Species

The Pigeon (*Columba livia*)

- Breeding period: All year round
- Nest: Rough nest made with twigs usually on or in buildings and never in trees
- Number of eggs: 2 white eggs (3.5 – 4cm)
- Incubation period: 18- 19 days
- Fledging period: 25 - 32 days (*up to 45 days in winter*)
- Food: Seed eater that will exploit multiple food sources including waste food in urban areas and deliberate feeding by the public.
- Constant pest



The modern pigeon is a direct descendant of “the Rock Dove” that nests on rocky coastal cliff faces, alongside gulls and other seabirds. The concrete and stone buildings of modern civilisation, with eaves, attics and lofts, have provided the pigeon with a mostly predator-free environment in which to live and breed along with an easily accessible source of food.

The Galah (*Eolophus roseicapilla*)

- Breeding period: All year round
- Nest: Hollowed trees
- Number of eggs: 2 -5 eggs
- Incubation period: 25 - 30 days
- Fledging period: 49 days
- Food: Seed eater, small insects & some fruit
- May become pest in grain farming and urban areas



Galahs eat a variety of seeds that they find on the ground but may also attack crops of wheat and oats, a behaviour that may impact on regional farmers. As urban sprawl and clearing for farming destroys their habitat, Galahs have become more common in urban areas, with some residents regarding them as pests. Galahs are a protected native species and lethal control measures are illegal, however all other non-lethal management and control measures are permissible. Consultation with the Department of Primary Industry is recommended prior to the formalisation of a Galah control program.

The Corella (*Cacatua sanguinea*)

- Breeding period: All year round
- Nest: Hollowed trees
- Number of eggs: 2 -4 eggs
- Incubation period: 25 days
- Fledging period: 45 days
- Food: Seed eater, some bulbs & fruit
- May become pest in farming and urban areas



Corellas feed in large noisy flocks especially along watercourses and where seeding grasses are found. The birds feed mainly on the ground, and have to drink on a daily basis. The most common foods are grains and grass seeds. Some bulbs and fruits may also be eaten.

Bird Management Techniques

The following hierarchy describes the priority in which feral bird control is best implemented;

1. Control / Eliminate food sources

The population of feral bird flocks are a direct reflection of their access to a food source. Therefore the first critical step in reducing their numbers is to identify the flocks food sources then introduce measures to limit or totally prevent their access to that source. This will result in a dramatic reduction in bird numbers, if not the complete relocation of the dwindled flock, within 30 - 60 days.

2. Identify then Restrict / Contain Roosting & Nesting sites

Vigilant detection and assessment of feral bird roosting or nesting sites is a key step in the control process. Although each site may differ the general principle of nesting site management is to limit the number of possible nesting sites, preferably to those that are most easily accessible. Therefore once a series of nesting sites have been identified, attempts should be made to contain and eliminate all but one or two sites (depending upon the initial flock size) through boarding up or otherwise restricting the birds' access to those sites. This then permits a smaller area for the controllers to focus on as they conduct egg substitution programs and other population reduction strategies.

During this phase, it is important to note that because pigeons in particular breed all-year round there is never a safe time to exclude birds when there will not be pigeon chicks or flightless juvenile birds in the nests. Therefore it is important to clear nests prior to containing the site otherwise developing birds may be trapped. If birds die as a result of having been sealed inside a nesting location, aside from the humane aspects, the decomposing carcasses will become maggot-infested within a matter of days, particularly in summer months and create odour, health and fly issues.

Research has also shown that the construction of dedicated nesting boxes, strategically placed away from populated commercial zones, have been effective in centralising feral birds, greatly facilitating egg substitution activities. Wild birds can be easily led to colonise constructed coups by using a fake, or decoy bird. This practice can also reduce bird droppings on buildings and in populated areas by up to 80%.

3. Egg Removal / Decoy Placement

Once nesting sites have been reduced to a few key locations that can be easily accessed, egg removal and substitution becomes possible. This practice involves removing live eggs and replacing them with a similar number of plastic replica eggs (usually 2), each about 3.5cm in length. This prevents the female from re-laying live eggs thus reducing the overall flock population.

A diligent egg replacement practice can, over a sustained period in combination with the previously mentioned measures, dramatically reduce the overall flock population by more than 50%.

4. Localised Trapping & Lethal Control

Research has shown that trapping, whether to relocate feral birds or to destroy them has little, if any, impact on the overall numbers of feral birds in any given area. This is because while trapping and shooting might initially reduce the population of a flock at a given time, if there is sufficient food supply the numbers will quickly re-establish themselves. Therefore requiring continual trapping or shooting activities to be conducted, for little or no net gain.

Some research has actually suggested that efforts to control the pigeon using culling techniques serve only to increase flock numbers because as adult birds are removed from the flock, younger birds, that would otherwise have a poorer chance of survival, are granted greater access to food supplies. Therefore culling adult birds creates a void within the flock which is then filled by the younger, surviving members of the flock.

Based on this, it is reasonable to suggest that lethal controls are not effective as a sole means of feral bird control and, while they may be employed as a “first strike” measure in the overall feral bird management and reduction strategy they do not offer a sustainable solution to the problem.

The following table is intended for use by Councils Feral Bird Management Technicians on an on-going basis for each flock being managed;

DATE	LOCATION	BIRD SPECIES	FLOCK SIZE (EST)	CONTROL MEASURE