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Information sheet

Control of Indian myna birds

This information sheet is designed to provide background on the RSPCA's position on the control of pest animals, and on the trapping and killing of common Indian mynas (*Acridotheres tristis*) in particular.

Control 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*¹ which are designed to ensure that control is necessary, effective and humane.

Control of Indian mynas

Control of Indian mynas is generally carried out through the use of small mobile cage traps designed to attract and trap mynas. The first selective myna cage trap was designed by Dr Chris Tidemann, a wildlife ecologist from the Australian National University who has been studying mynas for many years. This and other cage traps are now commercially available and are being used by a range of local councils and bird groups. Cage trapping takes advantage of mynas' flocking behaviour by attracting and trapping the birds when they congregate to roost. Trapped

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birds are generally killed by enclosing the trap and filling it with carbon dioxide gas.

There is qualified evidence on the success of using mobile traps as a means of long-term reduction of myna populations. A 2004 trial conducted by Environment ACT and the Australian National University found that, while trapping had some impact on myna numbers in the vicinity of traps, it may not be a practical method to eradicate or achieve sustainable broad-scale reductions in numbers. Research to develop more effective trapping strategies aimed at catching entire roosting flocks is now being conducted. Further information on this research is available at: sres-associated.anu.edu.au/myna/problem.html

RSPCA Australia's position on the trapping and killing of mynas

RSPCA Australia believes that trapping and killing of Indian mynas should only be carried out as part of a government-supervised humane control program. The program should have clear, measurable aims which include assessment of the success of the program in reducing the ecological impact of mynas in the target area. Individual trappers should record and report their activities back to a central supervising agency.

Trapping carried out on an ad-hoc basis is not supported by the RSPCA as it is ineffective in reducing and maintaining the adverse impacts of mynas in the long-term, and does not usually allow for monitoring and assessment of the success of the control program.

All trapping and killing of mynas must be carried out in accordance with the codes of practice (COPs) and standard operating procedures (SOPs) produced by the NSW Department of Primary Industries and funded by the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage. Trappers must read and be familiar with the procedures outlined in the SOPs for *Methods of euthanasia* (GEN001) and *Trapping of pest birds* (BIR002), prior to conducting any control activities. Copies of the COPs and SOPs are available for download from the following site:

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/pests-weeds/vertebrate-pests/codes/humane-pest-animal-control>

The most commonly used method of killing trapped mynas is through the inhalation of carbon dioxide. RSPCA Australia considers this to be an acceptable method of euthanasia when carried out in accordance with the above SOPs.

The use of car exhaust fumes is not an acceptable method of euthanasia.

While car exhaust does contain carbon monoxide, the concentration of this gas is not adequate to cause a rapid death. In addition, car exhaust is hot and contains other gases which are highly irritating to the respiratory tract.

Further information

Further information on RSPCA Australia policies on the control of pest animals and our activities towards improving the humaneness of vertebrate pest control can be obtained from the RSPCA Australia website www.rspca.org.au or by emailing science@rspca.org.au.

Reference

¹Humane Vertebrate Pest Control Working Group (2004). *A national approach towards humane vertebrate pest control*. Discussion paper arising from the proceedings of an RSPCA Australia/AWC/VPS joint workshop, August 4-5, Melbourne. RSPCA Australia, Canberra. Available from: <http://www.rspca.org.au/events/seminar2003.asp>