

Rainbow lorikeet management in Western Australia

12 October 2022

This fact sheet provides information about the management of rainbow lorikeets (*Trichoglossus haematodus*) to reduce the agricultural damage and negative environmental and social impacts they often cause in Western Australia.

Control options described have been effective in addressing pest bird problems in Australia but may require modification to suit local conditions.



Rainbow lorikeets are declared pests in Western Australia

Why manage rainbow lorikeets?

Rainbow lorikeets cause a variety of problems including:

- damage to commercial table and wine grape crops
- damage to fruit orchards
- damage to backyard fruit crops
- fouling of outdoor areas and vehicles with droppings
- competition with native species for food and nesting sites
- noise pollution at roosting and feeding sites
- potential disease risk to wild and captive parrots as they are carriers of Psittacine beak and feather disease.

What is the legal status of lorikeets in Western Australia?

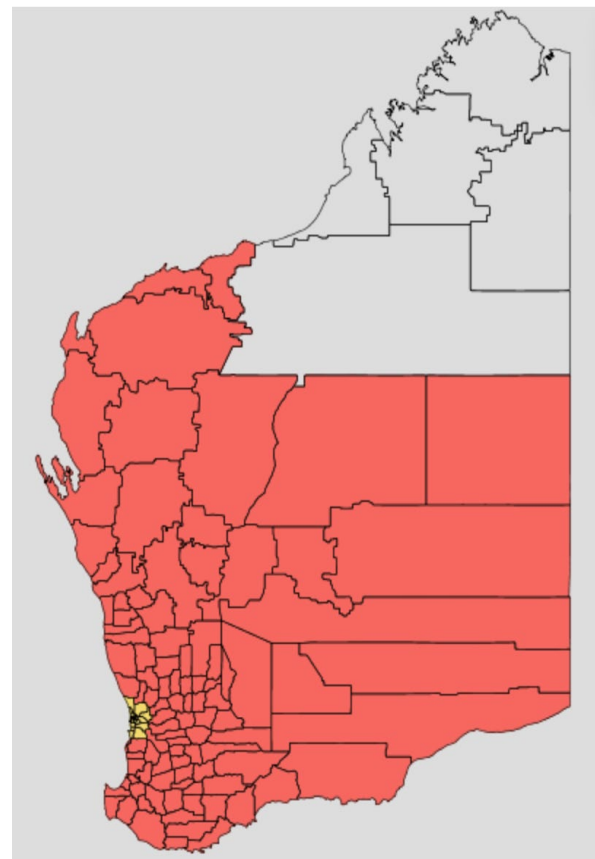
Rainbow lorikeets are declared pests in WA under section 22(2) of the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007* (BAM Act). Private, municipal, and state government landholders are responsible for the control of declared pests on their land.

Rainbow lorikeets are declared pests regulated in two control categories for different areas of the state:

1. In the Perth metropolitan area, rainbow lorikeets have been assigned a C3 control category, where some form of management should be applied that will alleviate the harmful impact, reduce numbers/distribution or prevent or contain spread of the rainbow lorikeet.
2. In most other areas of the state, rainbow lorikeets have been assigned a C1 control category and must be excluded (see map).

To keep rainbow lorikeets as a pet, a standard Fauna possessing (pet keeper's) license is required from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA). Rainbow lorikeets are classed as managed fauna by DBCA under the *Biodiversity and Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act), meaning they can be taken or disturbed from any local government area in WA without the need for a license, as long as they are causing, or are reasonably expected to cause, economic damage. Economic damage may be damage to property, agricultural activity or infrastructure resulting in a financial loss.

When this is the case, rainbow lorikeets may be taken or disturbed by firearm or disturbed by noise or a light generating device without the requirement for a license under the BC Act.



Designated control areas for rainbow lorikeets in WA

Legend

- C1 - Exclusion
- C3 - Management
- No control category assigned

Illegal to release lorikeets

In WA it is illegal to release rainbow lorikeets into the wild, including those captured or rescued. 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 pest animals to be handled and killed humanely.

Breaches of the state's animal welfare legislation can incur heavy penalties. Only competent persons should undertake these activities.

Who manages lorikeets?

The declared pest status of rainbow lorikeets means that government, industry, private landholders, and community groups all have a role to play in their management.

Rainbow lorikeets that are sighted outside the Perth metropolitan area should be reported to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD).

DPIRD and DBCA also assist commercial fruit producers in their local management of rainbow lorikeets by providing advice for management options and raising awareness of lorikeet problems in affected areas.

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, but anti-bird netting can be used in some instances to protect produce.

Using a number of control 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.

Unlike other parrots, rainbow 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 of control. 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 more efficient and effective use of management options, especially in areas where there are a number of small landholdings.
- 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 control method.
- Instant reduction in damage is unlikely. An integrated pest management approach (IPM) 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 and roosting.
- 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 repetitive 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 continue to 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.

What members of the public can do

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 pest birds.

If seen outside the Perth metropolitan area, please report sightings and roosting locations to DPIRD. Early reporting of sightings can help prevent new populations forming in regional areas. When reporting, describe any damage the birds 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.

What fruit growers can do

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

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

Providing your neighbours with information may help them understand the need for management options that are sometimes noisy and visually unpleasant.

Keeping lorikeets as pets

Many lorikeets are kept as pets in Western Australia. Several lorikeets with metal bands on their legs, showing they were previously kept as

pets, have been caught in Perth and elsewhere in the state.

To guard against escapes and releases, lorikeets should be maintained in secure double-door aviaries under DBCA licence. Unwanted birds should be surrendered to DPIRD South Perth and not released to wildlife shelters.



A double-door aviary prevents birds escaping when the outside door is opened



To keep rainbow lorikeets as a pet, a fauna possessing license is required

Further information

Contact:

- DPIRD Invasive Species and Environmental Biosecurity Officer
- Pest and Disease Information Service

Phone: +61 (0)8 9368 3080

Email: padis@dpird.wa.gov.au

For additional publications on rainbow lorikeets and parrots, visit the websites agric.wa.gov.au or dbca.wa.gov.au.

Summary of rainbow lorikeet management options

Option	When and where used	Benefits	Cost 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.	<p>High initial capital outlay and potentially not an economic option for protection of low-value crops.</p> <p>May obstruct farming practices and require maintenance unless properly designed.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Could move birds to other types of crops like wine grapes.</p>
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.	<p>Often costly as probably necessary to apply continually, with devices being rotated to be effective.</p> <p>Scarers may breach noise regulations and bird-scaring ammunition can be a minor fire risk during dry periods.</p> <p>Reported to be ineffective on some properties in the Swan Valley.</p>
Alternative foods	Alternative flowering or fruiting plants attractive to lorikeets are placed or planted away from the	In tree plantations, alternative foods are somewhat effective on	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.

	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.	ringneck parrots, but effectiveness against rainbow lorikeets is currently unknown.	
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	<p>Firearms must be licensed and of appropriate power to ensure good animal welfare outcomes.</p> <p>Use must be in accordance with the Firearms Act 1973. Use of air rifles to take rainbow lorikeets requires a Fauna Causing Damage Licence from DBCA.</p>	<p>Humane if properly carried out.</p> <p>Effective when used intensively to reduce numbers.</p> <p>Trains birds to associate humans with real danger.</p>	<p>Use in built-up areas or on very small farms requires great attention to safety and animal welfare issues. Need to make arrangements with local police and inform the local shire beforehand to avoid problems.</p> <p>Must be applied intensively.</p> <p>May not be effective in scaring birds.</p> <p>Shot birds may be replaced by another flock that finds the crop.</p>
Live trapping	A licence is required to take live fauna.	May remove birds causing damage at the critical time.	Euthanasia can only be applied by experienced operators.

	Attractants may include live lure birds or food (e.g. nectar or fruit), possibly in locations where lorikeets are already feeding.		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.
Illegal methods			
Poisoning	Illegal	—	Not selective and can result in the death of native animals, birds and pets. Crop contamination threatens markets.
Trapping and export / selling of birds	Illegal	—	Wild-caught adult birds do not humanise, are not suitable as pets and / or for export.
Capture and translocation	Illegal	—	Rainbow lorikeets are declared pests in WA and below the 20th parallel it is illegal to release them into the wild. Translocated birds need to establish themselves in a new environment which leads to poor welfare outcomes. This moves the problem to a new location.

Important disclaimer

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