

ANIMAL PEST CONTROL

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Alphachloralose for bird control

Introduction

In New Zealand alphachloralose is commonly used for the control of sparrows, pigeons, blackbirds, mynas and magpies. Alphachloralose is a narcotic and when used in concentrations of less than 2.5% it will anaesthetise birds rather than kill them. Comatose birds are then collected and the pest species humanely killed. Non-target species can be revived by placing them in a warm dark place.

A poison licence is not required to use alphachloralose if using manufactured baits with concentrations below 2.5%.

Baits available for bird control in New Zealand include alphachloralose treated wheat, barley and peas supplied in 1.5 kg and 4kg boxes. Alphachloralose paste is also available in 500g tubes.

Always READ THE LABEL and comply with all handling instructions before using, and understand symptoms of poisoning and the recommended first aid treatment.

Timing

Use alphachloralose prior to a likely period of crop damage. An alphachloralose poisoning campaign will have limited effect once crop damage begins, because adequate pre-feeding (for 3-5 days) is essential to get the target species to accept the bait type that will carry the alphachloralose dose.

Choose your bait

Determine the most acceptable bait for the target bird species. As a general rule use wheat or barley for sparrows, peas or wheat for pigeons, and commercially prepared pre-feed lure paste (see below) on bread for blackbirds, mynas and magpies.

Pre-feeding

Pre-feed your target species with your chosen non-toxic feed baits. The non-toxic bait must be laid in the target species' normal feeding areas.

If using grain baits, lay in bait trays or on smooth surfaces (this allows for the recovery of any

uneaten bait). Pre-feeding for 3-5 days will usually be sufficient, but it may be necessary to feed for up to 10 days.

Bait quantities need to be gauged during pre-feeding to ensure that sufficient bait is laid to satisfy the daily requirements of the target species. Observe birds feeding to ensure that the target species (rather than non-target species) are eating the bait. Always lay baits at the same time each day and wear similar coloured clothing. Approach and depart from the operation area in the same direction each day and avoid any unnecessary disturbance of the operation area. Continue feeding until the majority of the birds present are eating baits, and 1 day prior to laying alphachloralose baits reduce the quantity of pre-feed by half.

Laying alphachloralose baits

Prior to the poisoning operation warn anyone who has access to the area.

Lay alphachloralose treated baits in the same manner as pre-feed baits. Use slightly less bait than for pre-feeding. Lay alphachloralose on cold days if possible, where there is a low risk of bait taking by non-target species.

Ensure that pets and working dogs are restrained, as they are attracted to flapping (semi comatose) birds and will scare other birds off the bait line. Observe bait lines from a concealed position to see which way birds leave the line after feeding. This will assist recovery of comatose birds and provide the opportunity to scare non-target birds off the poison line.

Alphachloralose works quickly. Collect comatose birds at 30 minute to 1 hour intervals after the last bird has fed, or after the first bird has shown narcotic symptoms. Non-target species that ingest baits in cold weather should be collected for revival as soon as possible to avoid hypothermia. Recover uneaten bait. Small amounts can be buried away from waterways in a hole to a minimum depth of 1 metre or disposed at a municipal landfill. For larger amounts contact the Hawke's Bay Regional

Council for advice. Make a final search for affected birds 45 minutes after all alphachloralose baits have been picked up.

Comatose birds can be humanely killed by being placed in a freezer overnight. Dead birds should be buried, or incinerated if on production land.

Magpies and Mynas

Large populations of magpies/mynas can be successfully and quickly controlled using alphachloralose. Plan operations for winter or early spring when birds will readily accept baits.

Pre-feeding

- Observe all magpie/myna groups and identify their main feeding areas. Apply pre-feed baits to these areas. Scattering small pieces of aluminium foil also helps to attract magpies.
- Baiting sites should not be grazed by livestock and should be clear of bush or other cover. Magpies and mynas are comfortable landing and feeding in open areas and there will be less chance of attracting non-target birds to the baits.
- Prepare feed baits by spreading pre-feed paste onto bread slices and cut the slices into nine pieces, 9 baits per slice.
- Do not trap or shoot magpies/mynas in or near the intended control area for at least 3 months prior to the alphachloralose operation.

Application of Alphachloralose Bait

Once magpies/mynas are readily accepting pre-feed baits, lay the alphachloralose baits to coincide with cold, damp, overcast weather if possible. This will result in birds quickly succumbing to hypothermia. Do not lay treated baits if strong winds and/or heavy rain are forecast as these will spread the bait away from the treatment area.

Prepare alphachloralose baits in the same manner as pre-feed baits. To increase the amount of alphachloralose paste on bread, warm it in a microwave after applying the first layer of paste (clean your microwave thoroughly afterwards). This will melt the paste into the bread allowing another layer of paste to be applied. Allow at least one treated bait per bird. When targeting magpies allow extra bait as it is easy to under estimate local numbers. For thorough control of magpies follow up using Larsen type traps (see another environment topic in this series "*The Magpie*").

Blackbirds and Thrushes

These birds are relatively secretive feeders. When disturbed they will hide in hedgerows, bushes or other cover, and re-emerge once the threat has passed. Lay baits close (approximately 1m) to hedges and other cover. Use either wheat or peas for baiting.

Pre-feeding

- Allow approximately 50g of grain per bird
- Lay grain in strips about 1m wide at rate of 300 to 600g per m²
- On the day prior to the application of alphachloralose treated bait ensure that all pre-feed bait has either been eaten or is removed.

Application of Alphachloralose bait

- Lay baits 30 minutes before dawn.
- Use slightly more treated bait than for pre-feed bait.
- For maximum control, more than one day's baiting will be necessary, but allow at least two days between successive baitings.

Pigeons

Look for areas where pigeons habitually feed and estimate the numbers present. Select two or three areas to lay pre-feed. Use peas for baiting and follow the same pre-feeding and application techniques as for blackbirds and thrushes.

Sparrows

Prior to pre-feeding inspect the area noting sparrow numbers and preferred feeding sites. If sparrows are already feeding on spilt wheat or barley around silos, pre-feeding may not be necessary.

Pre-feeding

- Pre-feed with wheat or barley.
- Select 10 - 12 pre-feed sites, lay about 100g of pre-feed bait at each site.
- Prior to laying alphachloralose baits ensure that all pre-feed bait has been eaten or removed.

Applying Alphachloralose Bait

Baits can be laid at any time during the day.

- Best results are obtained by laying small quantities of bait at a large number of sites. Make a careful note of each bait site to ensure treated baits are not overlooked during clean-up.
- Baiting should continue for 1 to 2 days for best results.

Acknowledgements

Information supplied by Environment Bay of Plenty. Based on "*Guidelines for the Use of Alphachloralose Baits for Bird Control*" Pest Management Services Limited, PO Box 121, Waikanae.

For further information

For further information on animal pests or the Regional Pest Management Strategy, please contact the Biosecurity Animal Pest Officers at the Hawke's Bay Regional Council.

Wairoa	06 838 8527
Napier	06 835 9200
Waipukurau	06 858 8636
TOLL FREE	0800 108 838
www.hbrc.govt.nz	

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