

Alphachloralose for Bird Control

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 anaesthetises birds rather than kills 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 controlled substance licence is not required to use alphachloralose if using manufactured baits with concentrations below 2.5%. Baits available for bird control include alphachloralose treated wheat, barley and peas supplied in 1.5 kg and 4 kg boxes.

Alphachloralose paste is also available in 500 g tubes. Always read the poison label and comply with all handling instructions before using, and understand symptoms of poisoning and the recommended first aid treatment.

General poisoning principles

Poison before a likely period of crop damage. An alphachloralose poisoning campaign will have limited effect once crop damage begins.

This is 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. Before pre-feeding, 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 pre-feed lure paste (see below) on bread for blackbirds, mynas and magpies.

For successful pre-feeding, non-toxic feed baits 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 area in the same direction each day and avoid any unnecessary disturbance of the area. Continue feeding until the majority of the birds are eating baits, and one day before laying alphachloralose baits reduce the quantity of pre-feed by half.

Before 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 baits on cold days if possible, where there is a low risk of bait being taken by non-target species. During cold weather, non-target species that ingest baits should be collected and placed in a warm dark box as soon as possible to reduce the risk of them dying from hypothermia.

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 help with recovery of comatose birds and provide the opportunity to scare non-target birds off the poison line.

Collect comatose birds at 30 minute to one hour intervals after the last bird has fed, or after the first bird has shown narcotic symptoms. Recover uneaten bait and dispose of it according to the manufacturer's instructions. Make a final search for affected birds 45 minutes after all

alphachloralose baits have been picked up. Birds can be humanely killed by being placed in a freezer overnight. Dead birds should be buried or incinerated.

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.

Do not trap or shoot magpies/mynas in or near the intended control area for at least three months before the alphachloralose operation.

Applying alphachloralose bait

Once magpies/mynas are readily accepting pre-feed baits, time the laying of 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.

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. 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 underestimate local numbers. For thorough control of magpies follow up using Larsen type traps (see **Sustainable Options PA14 Magpies**).

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 1 m) to hedges and other cover. Use either wheat or peas for baiting.

Pre-feeding

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

Applying 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

Before pre-feeding inspect the area. Take note of 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 100 g of bait at each site.
- Before 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 one to two days for best results.

Assistance

Bay of Plenty Regional Council land management officers can offer advice on appropriate baiting methods and bait application rates.



5 Quay Street, Whakatāne
1125 Arawa Street, Rotorua
Rata Street, Mount Maunganui

Post: PO Box 364, Whakatāne 3158

Phone: 0800 884 880

Fax: 0800 884 882

Pollution Hotline: 0800 884 883

Email: info@boprc.govt.nz

Website: www.boprc.govt.nz