

MAGPIES

Gymnorhina species

Management programme

Exclusion	Eradication	Progressive containment	Sustained control	Site-led
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Impacts

Economic	Biodiversity	Soil resources	Water quantity/quality
Human health	Social and cultural wellbeing	Amenity/recreation	Animal welfare

Objectives

Reduce the risk magpies pose to the public in areas where they are causing a nuisance.

Why are they a pest?

Magpies were introduced to New Zealand in the 1860s from Australia to control pastoral insect pests. Two sub-species were introduced, the white-backed (*Gymnorhina tibicen hypoleuca*) and the black-backed (*Gymnorhina tibicen tibicen*) magpie. Crossbreeding has occurred and they are now considered one species. Both are black and white in colour.

Magpies are widespread throughout the Waikato region. They prefer open pasture areas with nearby tall trees for roosting and nesting. They are common around farmland, bush edges, gardens and in urban areas including schools, parks and airports.

They are extremely territorial birds and can be a considerable nuisance during the breeding season by swooping on and occasionally attacking people, especially children and cyclists. Waikato Regional Council receives numerous complaints during the nesting season regarding harm caused by 'dive-bombing' magpies. Most complaints are in relation to urban and public parks, reserves and fields. Occasionally complaints are received in relation to private properties.

Responsibility for control

All occupiers in the Waikato region shall control magpies where a magpie nest occurs on their property.

- On direction from an authorised person, upon complaint, all occupiers in the Waikato region are responsible for controlling magpies where the nest is on their property (rule MAG-1 of the *Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032*).
- Problem magpie nests on district or city council reserves and accessways should be reported to the appropriate council, which should arrange for the nests to be destroyed. Nests on Department of Conservation (DOC) land should be reported to the nearest DOC office or visitor centre.

How can I control them?

There are a range of control tools available for magpies, including trapping, shooting and poisoning (e.g. control paste). Using a variety of these methods will provide the best results.

What do they look like?



- Magpies are black and white in colour.
- Body length between 36cm and 44cm.
- Their distinctive flute-like call is usually heard early morning or evening; anecdotally described as 'quardle, oodle, ardle, wardle, doodle'.
- Often seen in flocks but may also be seen in pairs.
- A long breeding season – from July until March/April.

More information

Advice

- Call one of our animal pest staff for advice and information on controlling magpies on freephone 0800 800 401.

Web

- nzbirdsonline.org.nz
- Pest Detective
- pestoff.co.nz/products/pestoff-bird-control-paste
- Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032* – waikatoregion.govt.nz/rpmp
- Waikato Biosecurity Strategy 2022-2032* – waikatoregion.govt.nz/biosecurity-strategy