

7.29 Rooks (*Corvus frugilegus*)

Why are they a threat?

Rooks are large, black birds with a violet-blue glossy sheen that originate from Europe. They will forage on fields of cereal at all stages of the crop and will tear up large areas of pasture in search of grass grub and other invertebrates. Rookeries (nests) are generally built in pine or eucalyptus trees, although they have been found in poplar and walnut trees. When established, rookeries may approach several hundred birds.

Reasons for proposing a Plan

In decades past, there have been both rooks and rookeries established in Marlborough. These have now been eradicated from the region with only the odd occurrence of a small number of birds. They may have flown across the Cook Strait from established populations in the lower North Island (although under intensive management) or linked with the very small number of birds still known to be in Canterbury.

By ensuring these birds maintain profile as threats to Marlborough through a programme within a Plan, Marlborough can endeavour to maintain a rook-free status into the future.

Why the Plan is more appropriate than relying on voluntary actions

Without a Plan in place, rooks could quite easily be seen as “just another bird” by members of the community where voluntary actions rest. If not addressed early, birds that may come to Marlborough (for example, from the lower North Island), could form rookeries and develop a breeding population. Therefore a Plan is seen as more appropriate.

7.29.1 Objective

Over the duration of the Plan, prevent the establishment of rooks (*Corvus frugilegus*) in the Marlborough district to prevent future impacts on economic wellbeing.

Intermediate Outcome:

Exclusion	Eradication	Progressive Containment	Sustained Control	Site-led
------------------	--------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------

Principle measures to achieve the objective

1) Council Inspection and Service Delivery

Inspection by Council may include staff or contractors:

- a) Delivering a service to respond and investigate sightings of rooks in Marlborough.
- b) Delivering a service to control rooks if required, in liaison with the occupier.
- c) Visiting properties or doing surveys to determine whether pests are present.
- d) Monitoring effectiveness of control.
- e) Carry out control using administrative powers of the Biosecurity Act 1993, if necessary.

2) Requirement to Act

Land owners and/or occupiers or other persons may be required to act where rules or statutory obligations dictate the presence of pests is to be reported.

3) Advocacy and Education

Council may:

- a) Encourage land owners and/or occupiers and other persons to report any pests they find.
- b) Facilitate or commission research.

7.29.2 Rules

Rule 7.29.2.1

Any person is required to notify Council of any suspected rook (*Corvus frugilegus*) within 5 working days of making the initial observation.

A breach of this rule will create an offence under section 154N(19) of the Biosecurity Act.

Explanation of the rule:

The purpose of this rule is for entire community to assist Council with surveillance. Requiring people to notify Council of sightings, in addition to Council's own surveillance, will assist Council in achieving the objective of the programme. Birds new to the district can be found and control plans prepared if persisting in an area to prevent establishment.

Notifying the Council of the presence of the specified pest will enable the Council to:

- Update its records.
- Map new sites of this pest.
- Carry out control work before they spread.
- Determine whether new control regimes should be considered.
- Provide advice and information to occupiers where appropriate.

Council as the management agency will administer the rule.

7.211.3 Analysis of the benefits and costs for rooks

Background

Marlborough has always had low numbers of rooks in the past. The current objective in the Regional Pest Management Strategy for Marlborough 2012 is to eradicate rooks from Marlborough. This has been achieved.

Given the inherent risk and threat of rooks, it is now believed feasible to prevent rooks establishing once again in Marlborough.

Current situation in 2017

The last control operation was carried out at a rookery in 2005. Since that control operation rooks have not been known to be established in Marlborough. Only the odd transient bird has been seen. The current objective has been achieved.

Options to respond to rooks

Baseline: No RPMP

In this scenario no facilitation of sightings or control of rooks detected is undertaken.

Control option(s):

Exclusion Programme: In which the intermediate outcome for the programme is to prevent the establishment of the subject that is present in New Zealand but not yet established in an area.

Analysis for rooks

Council has determined that a low level of analysis be undertaken for rooks. The justification for this decision is documented in the supporting information document to this Proposal. That document also contains information about the risks that the objectives will not be reached.

Impacts

Rooks are large, black birds with a violet-blue glossy sheen, which originates from Europe. They will forage on fields of cereal at all stages of the crop and will tear up large areas of pasture in search of grass grub and other invertebrates. Rookeries (nests) are generally built in pine or eucalyptus trees, although they have been found in poplar and walnut trees. When established, rookeries may approach several hundred birds.

Identify impact	Quantify impact
The prevention of rooks establishing in Marlborough that would result in impacts on pastoral productivity, arable cropping and vegetable production.	<p>The impact could potentially be borne by the following sectors of the Marlborough agricultural industry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastoral farming - use of forage crops • Arable - grain production • Vegetable production - multitude of crops grown for both fresh and processed produce. <p>It is not practical to quantify these sectors other than to state they all form a large part of the agricultural economy in Marlborough.</p>

The extent to which any persons are likely to benefit from the Plan and the extent to which any persons contribute to the creation, continuance or exacerbation of the problem

Grouping	Beneficiaries		Exacerbators	
	Major	Minor	Major	Minor
1	Regional community	Occupiers of susceptible land		
2	Occupiers of susceptible land		Occupiers with the pest present	
3	Occupiers of susceptible land	Regional community	Occupiers with the pest present	
4	Regional community			Occupiers with the pest present

Benefits of each option

Benefit	Option	
	No RPMP	Exclusion
The prevention of impacts on pastoral productivity, arable cropping and vegetable production.	No programme cost	The benefit under an Exclusion Programme is maximised from the outset and kept at that level throughout the life of the Plan.

Costs of each option 6(2)(d)

Programme Costs	Option	
	No RPMP Annual cost (excl GST)	Exclusion Annual cost (excl GST)
Council costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control • Surveillance • Administration • Education/awareness 	-	\$500
Land occupier costs	-	-
Total	-	\$500
Costs of effects on values	Low, but increases exponentially over time	Insignificant

Proposed allocation of costs

The proposed programme costs are to be 100% Council costs, allocated across the various rating districts used in Marlborough under the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002. For further detail, see sections 11.3 and 11.4.

Rationale for the allocation of costs

For this detail, see sections 11.3 and 11.4.

Assumptions on which the impacts, benefits and costs are based

That under a No RPMP scenario, voluntary control will not cause any reduction in the future spread and/or impact over time.

Risk that each option will not achieve the objective

The supporting information document to this Proposal contains further information to support this analysis. A summary is outlined below.

Level of Risk	Option	
	No RPMP	Exclusion
Reason	N/A	Low
		Rooks are large, black birds with a very loud, distinctive call. Birds should not go un-noticed with an adequate awareness programme in the district. Control tools and techniques are available to prevent establishment.

Mitigation options

No mitigation options are assessed as being available to adjust the level of risk of options not achieving the objective.

Most preferred option

Exclusion Programme