

Non-indigenous Bird Declaration Policy

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Key points

- The Victorian government has developed a risk-based approach to guide the declaration of non-indigenous birds in Victoria, in line with the government's broader principles for managing biosecurity risks.
- The policy assists the Victorian Government to better manage the risks and impacts of non-indigenous birds in Victoria.

Need help with this policy?

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Policy statement

Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) is responsible for implementing the invasive species provisions of the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP Act). Under this responsibility, DJPR regulates declared pest animals into the following categories:

- Prohibited pest animals
- Controlled pest animals
- Regulated pest animals
- Established pest animals.

This policy outlines the criteria used to assess non-indigenous bird species to determine its declared pest status and therefore the regulatory approach to managing the species in Victoria. Assessment takes into account DJPR's risk-based approach to minimise the threat posed by pest animals in Victoria and the Guidelines for the Import, Movement and Keeping of Non-Indigenous Vertebrates in Australia (EIC Guidelines).

The policy aims to minimise the likelihood of non-indigenous birds escaping or being deliberately released as a source of propagule pressure, and the associated potential impacts to the economy, the environment, social amenity, and human health.

Scope

This policy defines DJPR's approach to declaring non-indigenous bird species under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* in Victoria to enhance protection of primary industries, the environment and community health for all stakeholders.

This policy does not address the procedure to review or assign a pest animal's Environment and Invasive Committee (EIC) Threat Category and the management of non-indigenous bird species for animal biosecurity purposes such as disease outbreaks.

Requirements

1. Non-indigenous bird species not known to be in Australia

Non-indigenous bird species will be declared as prohibited pest animals under the CaLP Act if the species meets both of the following criteria:

- The species is not known to be present in Australia,
- It has been categorised by EIC, as being of extreme, extreme (P) or serious threat to Australia.

Should the Australian Government amend the Live Import List¹ (*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*) to allow import of these species into Australia, they would be prohibited from being brought into, kept or sold in Victoria, including for areas managed in accordance with the *Zoological Parks and Gardens Act 1995*.

This approach will minimise the chance of such species becoming established in Australia and particularly in Victoria.

2. Non-indigenous bird species restricted to approved Victorian zoological facilities

Non-indigenous bird species will be declared as controlled pest animals under the CaLP Act, and their keeping limited to approved zoological facilities in Victoria, if the species meets the following criteria:

- The species is present in Australia but is only found in recognised zoological facilities such as zoological parks declared under the *Zoological Parks and Gardens Act 1995* (i.e. Melbourne Zoo, Werribee Open Range Zoo and Healesville Zoo) or non-statutory zoos and wildlife parks (e.g. Halls Gap Zoo and Ballarat Wildlife Park);
- It has been categorised and endorsed by EIC, as being of extreme or serious threat to Australia; and

Declaration will only apply to a small number of extreme or serious threat species that have been endorsed by EIC that are already restricted to approved zoological facilities in Victoria. These species also have complex husbandry requirements. This approach will prevent such species being kept widely in Victoria and thus minimise the chance of them escaping and/or being deliberately released.

Refer to the following [link](#) for further detail regarding the pest animal approved collection (zoo) permit.

3. Non-indigenous bird species that are known to be in Victoria in private collections

The government does not consider it reasonable to increase the regulatory burden for bird keepers in Victoria. Permits to keep species already known to be in private collections would not be required.

Bird species known to be in private collections in Victoria will be allocated as described in 3a and 3b on the basis of their threat to Victoria.

3a: Non-indigenous bird species that are kept in Victoria and are determined to pose a high threat of establishment in the wild in Victoria

The feral or wild populations of non-indigenous bird species will be declared as regulated pest animals under the CaLP Act if the species meets all the following criteria:

- The species is not widely established in the wild in Victoria;
- It has been categorised and endorsed by EIC, as being of extreme or serious threat to Australia, and/or the species is documented to be an escapee in other Australian jurisdictions;
- There is a likelihood that intervention will lead to reduced risk of establishment or eradication of feral or wild populations of the species.

Birds of these species observed/reported in the wild (i.e. outside of a secure enclosure) will be deemed by the government to be feral and in the broader public interest may be subject to control measures.

These incursions usually only involve a few individual birds (escapees from private collections). The incursions will be managed in accordance with the Invasive Plants and Animals Policy Framework and the requirement to take reasonable steps to control pest animals on any land in the state. Priority will be given to those species that have a reasonable chance of successful eradication with the resources available and the response will take into account the relative risks associated with the specific incursion.

¹ Plant and animal specimens considered to be suitable for live import into Australia are listed in the live import list, which is administered by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water, and the Environment

3b: Non-indigenous bird species determined not to pose a high threat of establishment in the wild in Victoria.

The government will have no role in the active management of non-indigenous bird species that are unlikely to establish in the wild in Victoria but will provide advice for the management or capture of these species when detected in the wild.

4. Non-indigenous quail, pheasants, and partridges, classified as game species

Game species are managed under the Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012. The government does not consider it reasonable to change the current management of non-indigenous quail, pheasants, and partridges.

The government will continue to provide advice on how to appropriately manage non-indigenous bird species under the Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012.

5. Non-indigenous bird species that are widely established in Victoria

The government does not consider it reasonable to impose the lawful responsibility to control widely established bird species upon landowners (including those in urban areas). Widely established non-indigenous bird species with known pest impacts will not be declared under CaLP.

The government will support relevant research and the provision of advice, for the management of these species in the wild, where appropriate. For example, humane methods to control certain pest species.

Problem birds or flocks should be managed at the discretion of landowners as long as the management complies with other relevant legislation, such as animal welfare. Established populations of non-indigenous birds as part of an outbreak of a notifiable disease will be managed in accordance with animal biosecurity legislation.

Risks

- Responding to incursions of non-indigenous birds may require some reprioritisation of DJPR resources.
- Some species likely to be listed under 3a are widely kept and traded species within Victoria. This situation will create an ongoing unregulated propagule pressure of high-risk species. This may make state-wide eradication of such species extremely difficult.
- Effective control options for birds are often limited to the use of firearms in urban areas thereby creating risks. The use of firearms in urban areas has potential to generate public concern and reputational risk to DJPR.

Responsibilities

DJPR will take a risk-based approach to managing non-indigenous birds in Victoria, in line with the nationally agreed principles of risk management.

Decisions are not based on 'zero risk' but rather on an 'acceptable level of risk' that is determined by a structured assessment and maintained at that level by the adoption of risk management and communication strategies.

Information and resources

Non-indigenous bird species can have significant potential and realised impacts to Victoria's environment, primary production, human health, and social amenity. For example, lost horticultural and other crop production, reduced amenity value in urban areas, risk to aviation safety and threat to native bird species.

This policy reduces the threat posed by non-indigenous bird species to Victoria's environment, primary production, human health, and social amenity.

Victoria's policy position in relation to management of non-indigenous vertebrates is guided by the Invasive Plants and Animals Policy Framework and aligns to the EIC Guidelines.

Acts

Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994

Wildlife Act 1975

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986

Regulations

Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012

Glossary/Definitions

CaLP Act – The *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* is the current main legislation covering noxious weed and pest animal management in Victoria and provides the power to declare species of plants and animals as noxious. One of the main objectives is to protect primary production, Crown land, the environment and community health from the threats posed by noxious weeds and pest animals.

Complex husbandry – husbandry that involves a complicated or elaborate arrangement for the keeping of an animal. It can relate to nutritional requirements; environmental requirements, e.g. high humidity, low temperatures; infrastructure requirements, e.g. enclosure security, nesting material, refuges and substrates; and environmental and behavioural enrichment requirements.

EIC – The national Environment and Invasive Committee, a cross-jurisdictional sectoral sub-committee of the National Biosecurity Committee.

EIC Guidelines – ‘Guidelines for the Import, Movement and Keeping of Non-indigenous Vertebrates in Australia’, a national document which outlines a national approach within the context of Australian Government, State and Territory legislation to minimise the risks posed by the importation (both into Australia and from one jurisdiction to another), movement and keeping of non-indigenous vertebrates. The EIC Guidelines explain how the EIC defines the establishment risk posed to Australia by a non-indigenous vertebrate and subsequent allocation of a species to a threat category (defined as ‘EIC Threat Category’).

EIC threat category – there are four threat categories: extreme, serious, moderate or low. Ranking assigned to a vertebrate: for birds and mammals, derived from a combination of the Public Safety Risk Rank, Establishment Risk Rank, and Pest Risk Rank; for reptiles and amphibians a combination of the Establishment Risk Rank and an Extreme Pest Risk Rank.

- **Low Threat** – species in this category, relative to other species, are predicted, using the current risk assessment models to pose a low risk of becoming a problem for the environment, primary production or social values including public safety. The keeping of Low Threat species may not be restricted by the EIC Guidelines, although individual States/Territories may impose restrictions necessary for protection within their jurisdictions as a precautionary measure. Additional factors may restrict the keeping of Low Threat species, such as conservation status and biosecurity considerations including animal welfare.
- **Moderate Threat** – species in this category may be restricted to collections approved and registered by the relevant State/Territory authority in line with the principles outlined. Additional factors may restrict the keeping of Moderate Threat species, such as conservation status and biosecurity considerations including animal welfare.
- **Serious Threat** – species in this category may be introduced and/or should be kept only in collections approved by the relevant State/Territory authority as being primarily kept for public display and education purposes, and/or for genuine scientific research approved by the relevant State/Territory authority. NB: The term ‘Serious’ is interchangeable with the term ‘High’, which has been used in some risk assessment documentation for vertebrates in Australia.
- **Extreme Threat** – species in this category should not be allowed to enter Australia, nor be kept in any State or Territory unless sufficient risk management measures exist to reduce the potential risks to an acceptable level. These measures should also be agreed to by all relevant authorities who oversee the responsibility for the on-going management of the species.

If a species has not been assessed or if there is insufficient information to be able to adopt the risk analysis approach, a precautionary approach will be adopted where the species will be assigned an **Extreme (P) Threat category**, where 'P' stands for precautionary, until it is assessed as belonging to another threat category. Using the precautionary approach, any species should be considered to be in the Extreme Threat Category and should be treated accordingly, until a risk assessment is conducted. However, it should be noted that a formal risk assessment may indicate that the species should remain as Extreme Threat based on the outcome of the assessment.

Incursion – An isolated population of a pest recently detected in an area, not known to be established, but expected to survive for the immediate future.

Non-indigenous bird – A species of bird that is not native to Australia.

Pest animal – An animal species declared under the CaLP Act. Pest animals are, or have the potential to be, a serious threat to primary production, Crown land, the environment or community health in Victoria.

There are four categories of pest animals:

- **Prohibited pest animals** – Does not occur naturally in Australia, is a serious threat to primary production, Crown land, the environment or community health in a place outside Victoria (or its potential threat in Victoria is unknown) and the importation, keeping and sale should be banned.
- **Controlled pest animals** – Does not occur naturally in Australia, has a high potential to become a serious threat to primary production, Crown land, the environment or community health in Victoria and should only be kept in approved high-security collections.
- **Regulated pest animals** – Does not occur naturally in Australia, has the potential to become a serious threat to primary production, Crown land, the environment or community health in Victoria and should only be kept in approved collections.
- **Established pest animals** – Are established in the wild in Victoria, are a serious threat to primary production, Crown land, the environment or community health in Victoria and should be eradicated, controlled or its spread in the wild should be prevented.

Propagule pressure – a composite measure of the number of individuals of a species released into a region to which they are not native.

Related Information

Strategy or Outcome

[Agriculture Victoria Strategy](#)

[Invasive Plants and Animals Policy Framework](#)

Other (e.g. Ministerial Directions, Codes of Conduct, Agreements)

Fate of seized, surrendered, or otherwise obtained pest animal policy

Pest Animals – Interpretation of pest animal declarations under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*

Ground Shooting of High-Risk Invasive Animals – Standard Operating Procedure

[Ministerial Statements of Expectations – Biosecurity](#)

[Consolidated list of declared pest animals](#)

References

- Bomford, M. (2008). Risk assessment models for establishment of exotic vertebrates in Australia and New Zealand. Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre. Canberra.
- Bomford M. (2006). Risk assessment for the establishment of exotic vertebrates in Australia: recalibration and refinement of models - A report produced for the Department of Environment and Heritage. Bureau of Rural Sciences. Canberra.
- Bomford M., Kraus F., Braysheer M., Walter L. and Brown L. (2005). Risk Assessment Model for the Import and Keeping of Exotic Reptiles and Amphibians. A report produced for the Department of Environment and Heritage. Bureau of Rural Sciences. Canberra.
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Policy authorisation

Issuing group / branch:	Agriculture, Food and Fibre / Food Regulation and Biosecurity Policy
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*A minor update maybe required to Section 4 (Non-indigenous quail, pheasants, and partridges, classified as game species) of this policy after the Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012 have been reviewed and updated.