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Bird-scaring methods – an introduction to risk management

There are many methods for scaring birds. Every method has risks that businesses must manage.

This guidance is for businesses that scare birds from their property or deter birds from gathering. For example, farms, vineyards, orchards and similar properties where crops are grown that attract birds.

There are risks associated with using bird-scaring methods. Some methods used in New Zealand workplaces have caused serious injuries and death.

We have developed quick guides that explain how to manage the risks for each of the methods shown below. You only need to read a specific guide if you are using that method.

Noise-makers

Firearms

Gas guns, gas cannons and pyrotechnic devices

Vehicles

Visual methods

Lasers

Airborne methods

Drones

Barriers

Netting

Here are some things you need to be aware of before you start

1. If you are a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) on a farm, vineyard, orchard or similar property, or you own or manage an airport, you have legal obligations under the [Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 \(HSWA\)](#)
2. If you are a PCBU, you must (so far as is reasonably practicable):
 - make sure that the health and safety of workers and other people is not put at risk from the work carried out
 - provide and maintain a work environment that is [without health and safety risks](#)
3. **Risks** to health and safety **must be eliminated** so far as is reasonably practicable.
 - If a risk cannot be eliminated then you [must minimise risk](#) wherever possible.
 - [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#) is only used when other control measures alone cannot adequately manage the risk.
4. When you are thinking about what methods to use, and assessing risks, talk with your workers. They often have practical and cost-effective solutions as well as a perspective that you may not have.
5. You must provide workers with [suitable and adequate information, training, instruction and supervision](#)
6. You must have [emergency plans](#) in place and workers must have access to [first aid](#) resources and facilities.
7. A property hazard map or [farm hazard map](#) is an easy way to show all hazards on your property. The map can be based on an aerial photograph, a land title map, or even a hand-drawn sketch. It will help you to show workers where the hazards are. You can use the map when you are discussing how risks are managed.
8. Tell all workers and visitors to your property **what methods are in use, and where**. Put up signs at entry points to areas where bird-scaring is taking place.
9. It is your responsibility to **manage the impact** on other people and properties. Use effective control measures to prevent drift from lights, noise, or chemicals. Create exclusion zones around areas where particular methods or types of equipment are in use.
10. Make sure that you consider both the physical and the psychological work environment. For example, active bird control is often an early morning or dusk activity – so the risks to be managed may include the risk of impairment due to fatigue and time pressures, as well as risks associated with glare, sunstrike or working in low light levels.
11. Local or national **rules and regulations** may apply to some methods – such as district council rules, [Civil Aviation Rules](#) or the [Resource Management Act](#)

Your bird-scaring methods should comply with all relevant legal obligations.

They may limit the hours of use, how close to other properties equipment or devices can be operated, and how loud sounds can be.
12. Find out if any licencing requirements apply, such as which methods require a [firearms licence](#)
13. Read the **manufacturer's instructions**. Product manuals may identify risks that need to be managed when workers are installing, setting up, operating, servicing and/or maintaining equipment.
14. Keep bird-scaring gear **clean and well-maintained**. To avoid equipment malfunction or damage, use only recommended parts.
15. Some bird-scaring methods expose workers to [harmful noise levels](#) that can damage hearing.
16. Workers need to be **mentally and physically alert**. They may not be able to do their job safely if they are [impaired](#) by things such as fatigue, alcohol or drugs (including some prescription medication), distractions, noise, health conditions, stress, or working in extreme heat or cold. Prepare effective policies for impairment risks that you have identified – for example, a [fatigue](#) policy.