



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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To: All Conservative MPs

29th April 2019

Dear Colleague,

General licences for bird control: major changes to licensing requirements

I am writing to provide a further update on the actions that Natural England is taking to minimise the impact of the revocation of general licences for controlling certain species of wild bird. I would like to stress that there is, and will not be, a ban on managing bird species where there is a legitimate reason to do so. Anyone that needs to control pests can.

Natural England are continuing to work at pace to undertake licensing assessments to enable them to permit lethal control of certain bird species in defined situations. The first general licence, for controlling carrion crows which may cause harm to livestock was published on 26th April on gov.uk. It is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/carrion-crows-licence-to-kill-or-take-them-gl26>.

NE is prioritising circumstances that are likely to be of the greatest need and impact at this time of year and will publish licences according to the following timetable:

Priority 1: To be issued from w/c 29 April or sooner

- Prevent serious damage to livestock – Carrion crow
- Conserving wild bird – magpie
- Conserving wild bird – Carrion crow
- Prevent serious damage to crops – woodpigeon
- Prevent serious damage to crops – Rook
- Prevent serious damage to crops – Canada goose
- Preserving public health and public safety – Feral pigeon
- Preserving public health and public safety – Canada goose
- Preserving public health and public safety – Lesser Black Backed Gull
- Preserving public health and public safety – Herring gull

Priority 2: To be issued from w/c 13 May or before

- Conserve wild birds - Canada goose
- Prevent the spread of disease - Feral pigeon
- Prevent serious damage to foodstuffs for livestock – Carrion crow
- Prevent serious damage to foodstuffs for livestock – Rook
- Prevent serious damage to foodstuffs for livestock – Carrion crow

Prevent serious damage to foodstuffs for livestock – Rook
Prevent serious damage to foodstuffs for livestock – Magpie

Publication of other licences will be confirmed in due course and Natural England has committed to a full and open process, including consultation, in a wider review of general licensing that will take place later this year.


As I set out in my 25th April letter, where action is not covered by a general licence, those in need can apply for an individual licence using a simplified online process. Application forms were published on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) on 25th April at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wild-birds-licence-to-control-certain-species>.

Furthermore, Natural England recognise that there may be cases of genuine emergency where immediate action is required.

I am fully aware of the concerns that have been raised and the potential deleterious impact this could have on farming, shooting and conservation if not handled promptly and effectively. I am grateful for your patience while Natural England work at pace to resolve this issue. Natural England's helpline facilities have been strengthened for those who have questions about carrying out control of species at this time. Assistance is available at enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk.

With every good wish,



Michael Gove