

THE HUMANE EUTHANISING OF PEST BIRDS

humane

Adjective

1. showing kindness and sympathy
2. inflicting as little pain as possible:

characterized by tenderness, compassion, and sympathy for people and animals, esp. for the suffering or distressed: humane treatment of horses.

There is a great deal of debate as to the suitability of the use of carbon monoxide from car exhausts in disposing of pest birds.

Recommended methods are CO₂, lethal injection, or breaking their necks.

CO₂ is an expensive gas supplied in a cylinder which requires proper handling and storage as do all pressure vessels. Most householders would be unaware of the regulations and could place themselves and others in danger in attempting its use. The smallest practical cylinder is 6kg which is not easy for many (particularly the elderly) to handle. They cost around \$20 + 40c a day hire fee. Many can not afford this cost. The number of gassings each delivers varies between 1 ½ or 10 depending on the size of the trap. Occupational Health and Safety issues apply.

Lethal injection. This method requires the caged birds to be transported to a vet where they are individually handled and injected. Consider the stress this places the birds under. The end is humane but the journey is not. The birds panic as each one is removed from the cage. This is not ideal nor humane.

Breaking their necks. If the person doing the neck breaking knows exactly what they are doing the end is quick. If they are not proficient then a great deal of pain is suffered by the birds. Once again you have the distress and panic factor as they are removed one by one. Once again, not humane.

Carbon Monoxide from a cold engine.

Using a cold engine avoids the birds being subjected to hot gases and the stress it causes. By the time the gas is hot the catalytic converters have cut in. they commence to operate only when the temperature of the gas has reached 250 deg C.

Gassing prior to this temperature being reached means the maximum amount of carbon monoxide is applied with the birds rendered unconscious very quickly. With a relatively small cage such as the Myna X (a 44cm cube) the effect is just as quick as a lethal injection (quote from an RSPCA employee who has used both lethal injections and carbon monoxide but who is afraid to be named)

At no time during this process do the birds get distressed and panic.

Why is this?

The traps are not approached until after dark and are immediately placed into a plastic bag. There is no reason for the birds to panic. They are quite calm in the dark. The insertion of a hose from the exhaust is not noticed by them. When the carbon monoxide hits they all go to sleep together. They are not subjected to the stress of trying to avoid hands reaching into the cage and seeing others killed.

Which system is more humane? It is obvious to me that the use of cold car exhaust gas is.

It is also the cheapest and most practical method for the general public to use.

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Note:

Where larger cages are involved it may not be appropriate as the catalytic converters may cut in before sufficient carbon monoxide is present. With smaller cages a vehicle can deliver a king hit which is virtually instantaneous. Manufacturers of large traps should therefore not recommend this method.