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GALAHS POISONING

KILL THE "COCKY"

By J. L. LONG, Research Technician
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(Agriculture Protection Board)

NO! Not the one that tills the land, but his enemy, the pink and grey galah (Kakatoe rosei-capilla). Farmers have usually found the destruction of galahs damaging standing crops and bagged, or stored grain, fairly difficult. Past methods of boiling grain and adding sweetened substances are rather laborious and require a lot of time. Now, a quick and relatively simple method is available to farmers, using paraffin oil to adhere poison to the grain.

Tests and trials have recently been conducted in the northern and eastern wheatbelt of W.A. with considerable success. The new method is to mix 1 oz. of powdered strychnine with 4-5 fl. ozs. of paraffin oil and apply the mixture to 10-16 lb. of grain. Both wheat and oat grains have been used, but as it is usual for the galah to shell the oats, wheat is preferred.

Results from this method are most encouraging. In June and July, 1960, at Beacon, Cleary and Wialki Sidings in the Eastern Wheatbelt, poisonings were carried out at the wheat bins, resulting in the destruction of some 1,500 galahs. These kills were estimated to be in the vicinity of 60 per cent. to 70 per cent. of the numbers present. It was also noted that approximately three grains of wheat poisoned in the manner described killed a galah in 15 minutes.

In the northern wheatbelt attempts have been made to poison galahs at such sites as dams, in ripe crops, in newly seeded paddocks and at bagged grain stacks awaiting carting at harvest time. Although a few birds have been killed prior to harvest time by placing poisoned grain close to the edges of crops where galah damage is evident at this time, they are usually more interested in feeding on the grain heads. Around dams and other watering places is not always the best place to conduct a poisoning. However, amongst small flocks results of 50 per cent. have been achieved at such localities. If baiting near water, poisoned grain can be placed out near a tree which is used as a roosting place by the birds as they pass to and fro.

Probably one of the best places to poison galahs on the farm is where bags of grain are stacked in the paddocks. If the stacks are covered with tarpaulins or bags (weighed down with weights to prevent it from flapping and blowing off) the birds can be free fed and poisoned by grain laid on top of the covers. There is no need to poison every stack as the birds soon find those with grain exposed on top.

Birds are often found feeding on freshly sown paddocks but efforts to attract them onto deliberately laid heaps of grain have so far been unsuccessful. Farmers claim that they are able to obtain good kills by broadcasting poisoned grain behind the seeder.

In general, for a successful galah poisoning, the birds must be concentrating regularly on a recognisable feeding ground and must be free fed for 2-3 days before any poison is laid if existing conditions at the site are altered.

SUMMARISING

The following mixture has been used successfully to poison galahs:
- 10-16 lb. wheat.
- 4-5 fluid ounces of liquid Paraffin Oil.
- 1 oz. of powdered Strychnine.
The poison and oil are first mixed together and the resulting oily paste mixed evenly over the wheat. When all the galahs are feeding on unpoisoned wheat, the free feed is replaced by poisoned grain. If free feeding is carried out properly, a successful reduction in numbers should result.

MAKE A WOOD CARRIER

A useful addition to the household equipment and one which should be fully tested in this cold weather can be quickly made from a sugar-bag or piece of strong fabric. This is a wood carrier which enables an armful of wood to be carried without the usual accompanying dirty smudges on clothing.

JUDGING A HORSE’S AGE

A RHYMING REMINDER

This ancient doggerel (author unknown) provides a useful means of memorising the changes which take place in a horse’s teeth as it grows from foalhood to old age.

To tell the age of any horse
Inspect the lower jaw of course.
The six front teeth the tale will tell
And all your doubts and fears dispel.

Two middle nippers you’ll behold
Before the foal is two weeks old.
Before eight weeks two more will come.
Eight months the “corners” cut the gum.

Two outside grooves will disappear
From middle two in just one year.
In two years from the second pair
In three, the “corners” too are bare.

Nigh three the middle “nippers” drop,
Nigh four the second pair can’t stop,
When rising five the third pair goes,
At five a full new set he shows.

The deep black spots will pass from view
At six years from the middle two.
The second pair at seven years,
At eight the spot each corner clears.

From middle nippers, upper jaw
At nine the black spot will withdraw.
The second pair at ten are white.

Eleven finds the corners white.

As time goes on, the horseman knows,
Each oval tooth three-sided grows.
They longer get, project before,
Till twenty when we know no more.
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