



WILD BIRDS AND NETTING



The RSPCA is opposed, in principle, to killing or taking wildlife – in circumstances where there is a proven case for controlling wild animals, we advocate the use of non-harmful methods of deterrence where possible.

»» If you see a live animal entangled in or trapped behind netting, please contact the RSPCA's 24-hour cruelty and advice helpline on 0300 1234 999.

Regular monitoring and maintenance

Bird deterrent netting can be an effective means of keeping birds off structures as it can prevent problems without needing to resort to other measures such as killing birds. However, it's vitally important that any netting is properly installed and maintained.

Free-living wild animals are not normally covered by the Animal Welfare Act 2006. However if they are under the control of man (for example as a result of having been captured or confined – such as becoming trapped in netting), then the legislation may apply. The extent to which it applies, and whether an offence is committed, will depend on the particular circumstances of a situation.

Problems arise when netting is incorrectly installed or when it becomes damaged and is not repaired, leaving gaps where birds are able to enter and become trapped. If the netting is not checked or maintained, there is a risk that birds may suffer and die from injury or starvation.

Injured birds will require treatment from the nearest vet or wildlife centre – for information on RSPCA wildlife centres, check out www.rspca.org.uk/wildlife or call us for advice on 0300 1234 999.

If a bird becomes trapped behind netting, the owner of the building where the netting is situated should be informed (if assistance is needed to free a bird, call the RSPCA's helpline 0300 1234 999). The owner should then contact whoever erected the netting (usually a pest control company) as it is their responsibility to ensure that the netting is fit for purpose and appropriate in that location.

Let us know...

»» We recommend that anyone with netting installed on their property sets up a system to check regularly for trapped birds and to ensure any netting is in good repair.

If you have seen dead birds in netting, or where you are aware of a regular issue of birds becoming trapped in netting, we would be grateful if you could please forward the following information to: wildlife@rspca.org.uk:

»» All wild birds, including pigeons and gulls, and their nests are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

- Address where the netting is located (include postcode where possible).
- The owner of the property or company (if known) and the address if different to above.
- The date of incident.

We will then write to the owner of the property to ask them to inspect their netting more frequently and to improve their maintenance schedule to prevent the problem reoccurring.

It is an offence, except under licence, to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird, take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built, and to intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

»» To report live birds entangled in or trapped behind netting, please contact the RSPCA's 24-hour cruelty and advice helpline on 0300 1234 999. advice helpline on 0300 1234 999.

Photo: Rachel Barrat