



Pigeon Control Advisory Service
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Scottish Government Leads the Way with New Gull Control Legislation

As of the 1st April 2008 the new Scottish Government General Licence (No. 3) came into force to which anyone wishing to kill gulls or remove their nests must adhere. This licence now only covers Great Black-Backed Gulls, Herring Gulls and Lesser-Black Backed Gulls. To control any other species of gull lethally, such as the Common Gull, a specific licence must be applied for.

The General Licence system (part of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) allows for any property owner or council that acts within the terms and conditions of the relevant General Licence to kill gulls, remove their nests or interfere with their eggs as a method of control. However, these actions can only be taken to protect public health and safety or prevent the spread of disease.

Lethal control should only be used as a 'last resort' under the General Licence system and cannot be used unless **all** methods of non-lethal control (installation of deterrents etc) have been tried and found to fail. Not only this, but there must be a **clear** and **demonstrable** risk to public health before lethal methods can be used. Many councils and pest control companies completely ignore these criteria and kill both adult and dependent gulls, as well as remove nests and destroy eggs, before first using non-lethal control options and in situations where there is no risk to public health.

Most property owners that contract a pest control company, or their local council, to remove gull nests and/or kill gull chicks are unaware that they are legally responsible for any action taken on their behalf. If the company or council that they authorise to deal with the problem acts outside the law it is quite possible that they themselves will face prosecution as well as their contractor.

Although the General Licencing system is designed to offer pest species of birds a degree of protection under the law, in reality the system has been abused so extensively by pest control companies and councils that birds such as gulls and pigeons have been afforded no protection whatsoever.

The new General Licence No. 3 will put an end to this wholesale abuse of the General Licence system by requiring any person acting under it to provide a detailed report of what birds were killed under the licence, how many nests were removed, how many eggs were destroyed and when. More importantly, justification as to why lethal control was used must be provided and if the person or company concerned is found to have used lethal control inappropriately the Scottish Government is empowered to bring a prosecution.

Any action to kill gulls or remove gull nests in the current season (2008-2009) must be detailed in a report provided to the Landscapes and Habitats Division of the Scottish Government by January 2009.

This new piece of legislation is warmly welcomed by PiCAS UK and it is hoped that as a result of it the number of birds killed and nests removed each year in Scotland will dramatically reduce in favour of sustainable and effective gull management programmes. Tens of thousands of pest birds such as gulls and pigeons are illegally killed for profit each year by those apparently acting under the General Licence system in Scotland and this is clearly set to change.

Once again Scotland leads the way where the effective management of wildlife is concerned. The same cannot be said of England and Wales however, where the terms and conditions of the antiquated General Licence system are ignored by pest control companies and councils alike who use lethal control excessively, inappropriately and in direct contravention of the General Licences. It is clear that any piece of legislation that cannot be policed is worthless and this is certainly the case with the Wildlife and Countryside Act in England and Wales.

Guy Merchant, Technical Director of PiCAS UK said: "The Scottish government must be applauded for their stance where this issue is concerned. Gull control is constantly in the headlines throughout Scotland and yet the reason the problem continues to exist to the extent that it does is the continued use of ineffective and invasive controls such as culling and nest removal. This newly drafted General Licence will set a new standard for gull control in Scotland and it is fully supported by PiCAS UK."

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For further information on PiCAS UK visit the website at www.picasuk.com or contact Emma Haskell on 02392 584540 or 07903 011715.

Editors Notes:

The Pigeon Control Advisory Service (PiCAS) consists of two organisations providing independent bird control consultancy services.

"The Pigeon Control Advisory Service (PiCAS) was formed to deal with an ever-increasing demand for advice on humane, non-lethal and sustainable bird control systems as a result of the fact that conventional bird control services, such as culling, are completely ineffective. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), considered to be the leading authority on birds and bird management systems worldwide, refers many of its bird control enquiries to PiCAS UK and the PiCAS Group is recommended by numerous national and international agencies worldwide.

The reputation of the PiCAS Group has been built on its pioneering work where the humane and sustainable management of bird populations is concerned.

PiCAS UK offers an independent consultancy service to a wide range of clients throughout the UK providing expert advice on the control of all bird species. Although PiCAS UK specialises in

the control of the pigeon, PiCAS UK will offer advice on the control of any species of bird including waterfowl.

Due to its independent status all services provided by PiCAS UK are completely free from commercial bias. PiCAS UK has no commercial links or ties to pest control products or pest control service providers thereby ensuring that the client is provided with independent expert advice based on over 30 years of experience in the bird control sector.

All PiCAS UK's consultants are acknowledged bird control experts with extensive knowledge of birds, bird habitats and bird control."