



ZIMBABWE

## Quelea Bird Alert

Press Statement by

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**Minister of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water, and  
Rural Resettlement**

**Quelea bird (*Ouelea quelea lathamii*, Nzwanzwe /Ngozha/ Umdumanyoni)**



### 1.0. PREAMBLE

- 1.1. The Red-billed Quelea is the most damaging pest of wheat, sorghum and millet in Zimbabwe. Quelea birds breed in arid border areas of Zimbabwe, such as Deka, Pandamatenga, Beitbridge, Mukumbura and Gonarezhou.
- 1.2. Known traditional roosting sites include Dande, Save Valley Conservancy, Matetsi, Deka, Mana pools, Chewore, Nyamapanda, Mwenezi, Gonarezhou, Binga, Beitbridge, Gwanda and Plumtree.
- 1.3. Quelea breed in summer in these areas, and leave these breeding places in the drier months when grass seed is scarce.
- 1.4. Quelea control should ordinarily be undertaken in these breeding areas in summer to reduce the number of Quelea infesting winter wheat and barley.
- 1.5. The average quelea bird eats around 10 grams of grain per day. This is roughly half its body weight and a flock of two million can devour as much as 20 tonnes of grain in a single day.
- 1.6. Reports of Quelea bird attack on wheat have been received from Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East, Midlands, Mashonaland West and Manicaland.

## 2.0. MANAGEMENT OF QUELEA

- 2.1. Timeous control of Quelea, both in summer and winter, is critical to protect wheat and barley harvests.
- 2.2. Quelea should be controlled in the breeding sites in summer to limit the load in winter.
- 2.3. With climate change and promotion of traditional grains, there is abundant feed in summer spurring growth in populations in the breeding areas if the birds are not controlled.
- 2.4. In winter Quelea should be controlled at roosting places using the appropriate chemical and by trained personnel.

## 3.0. QUELEA CONTROL DIRECTIVE

- 3.1. The Quelea Control Act (Chapter 19:10) mandates the Minister of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Resettlement to issue directives for the control for Quelea, as I hereby do.
- 3.2. The law states that "The owner or occupier of any land upon which Quelea birds are nesting or roosting shall, as soon as possible and in any event within seven (7) days after he first becomes aware of the nesting or roosting of Quelea birds on his land, give notice thereof to-
  1. (a) the local authority for the area in which his land is situated; or
  2. (b) the nearest-
    - (i) police station; or
    - (ii) Department of Agricultural Technical and Extension Services (AGRITEX) or
    - (iii) office of the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority.
- 3.3. In giving the notice the owner or occupier should provide details of the locality upon his land where the quelea birds are nesting or roosting and any other related information.
- 3.4. In this regard, farmers are directed to immediately comply and report all incidences of Quelea in terms of the law, so as to protect our harvests.
- 3.5. This will enable the Migrant Pests Control Team comprising the Problem Bird Control Units under the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and the Department of Research and Specialist Services to immediately deploy teams to affected areas to effect control of the birds before they cause further extensive damage.



- 3.6. Farmers can also collect from GMB depots bird repellent (Anthraquinone), Bird Shield, and immediately apply a foliar spray once to twice a week.
- 3.7. Currently, Quelea control at roosting sites is being conducted using Cyanophos 500 ULV. The country has limited stocks of this chemical, and awaits the arrival of additional chemical.

## 4.0. CONCLUSION

- 4.1. The current Quelea outbreak can be controlled if all stakeholders cooperate.
- 4.2. We must protect the wheat and barley crops as we seek national self-sufficiency for wheat from the 66 435 ha grown, and from the 7 000 ha of barley. Every grain counts!