

Living with kea



KEA
CONSERVATION
TRUST



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Sharing spaces with an inquisitive parrot

If you live in the South Island of Aotearoa New Zealand, you may at some stage have shared your environment with the inquisitive kea. This endangered native parrot can be found from the mountains to the sea, with an estimated 3,000–7,000 birds across Aotearoa.

Living in an area with kea may mean you've noticed them around your property, especially over the summer months when young kea have just left the nest and are exploring new environments.



Photo: Holly Wallace



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As predator control efforts increase, kea populations are likely to grow – and so too are human encounters with them.

We want people to enjoy living alongside kea – they're unique taonga (treasures) of Aotearoa. Although it may feel like they've taken up residence in your backyard, kea will usually move on when there's no access to food, lead or interesting objects to play with. In colder parts of the country, they often move on naturally as the cooler months arrive.

This booklet aims to help you keep your property and kea safe.

Steps you can take to reduce kea damage to your property

We know that sometimes kea can stick their beaks into things you'd rather they didn't, so here are some easy ways to kea proof your property:

1

Remove access to lead
(for example, lead-headed
nails and lead flashing)

2

**Remove access to all
rubbish and food**
on your property

3

**Make your property as
'boring' as possible to kea –**
when they get bored, they
tend to move on quickly

What attracts kea?

Lead

One of the biggest draw cards for kea is lead – most commonly lead-headed nails and lead flashings found in buildings constructed before 1991. Kea like the taste of lead, but it is poisonous and one of the biggest causes of kea deaths. The Kea Conservation Trust runs a lead removal programme that supports lead replacement costs.

Food

When kea have access to rubbish or food, they quickly learn to scrounge. Once they associate people and buildings with food, they're more likely to hang around, raid bins, and cause damage to roofs, vehicles and anything else they can get their beaks into. Human food can also be harmful to them.

Remember, what happens on your property affects your neighbours and the wider community too, so make sure you're doing your bit to remove all access to food.

Use the following tips to prevent kea from getting into your rubbish or food:

- Bring all food indoors, including pet food.
- Secure rubbish, recycling and compost bins by using heavy-duty chicken wire to block access.
- Move bins inside a garage or shed, or secure them by attaching heavy weights to the underside of the lid. You can also use a 'parrot proof' bin lock. Placing heavy weights like rocks on top of bins often doesn't work, as many kea have learnt how to move them. If you are leaving bins outside, make sure they are not overfilled so the lid can properly close. For more information, visit securealid.com.



Photo: Rob Potts

Chimney flues

If kea are getting at the rubber around your chimney flue, you can create a cone, box or flat panel that sits over the rubber. This is fairly simple and cheap to make out of flat sheet steel and most local builders will be able to do this for you. The sawn-off end of a mussel buoy can also be used.

Things left outside

Pack away anything moveable – such as shoes, clothing, umbrellas, power tools and toys – when you head inside for the day. Kea are most active at dawn and dusk, and they're most likely to get into trouble when people aren't around.

Cover things you can't move, like spa pools, with a layer of old carpet or a heavy-duty tarpaulin.

Rubber wiring

Kea like to chew on rubber-coated wires, especially on things like tractors and solar panels. To protect wiring, run it inside plastic conduit piping or a flexi metal hose guard. Kea may still try to chew on plastic conduit, but it's easier to replace that than the wires! Dark colours like black tend to work best.

Rubber washers

Kea also like the texture of soft rubber washers, so use cyclone (metal) washers to cover and protect the rubber washers on polycarbonate roofing.

Sheds

Close all shed doors and windows overnight so kea can't get inside. If your shed doesn't have a door to close, make the space as difficult as possible for a bird to get into.

Cars / bicycles

Kea love chewing on rubber and seats. Use heavy-duty car covers or park your vehicle in a garage with a door. Cover bike seats with a bucket or store the bike inside.

Heavy machinery

Heavy machinery, such as diggers, tractors and quad bikes can be attractive to kea. Always close the cab doors where possible or store machinery in a shed or garage. Cover seats and any areas that have rubber, such as handlebars or windscreen seals and wipers, with a tarpaulin.

Humans

Kea like to play. By interacting with them, you're encouraging them to stay on your property. This includes following them, talking to them, throwing things at them, shouting at them or banging on the roof to scare them. They may think you're just trying to play with them. Try to ignore them as much as possible.



Silage

As a preventative approach, it's recommended that baled silage is stored in pit holes. If you store your silage in bales above the ground, you might find that kea will tear at the plastic wrapping. It can be difficult to prevent this, but the Kea Conservation Trust are trialling deterrents and can provide assistance.

Ridge capping

Kea love to chew the soft, smooth weather strip on roof capping. To stop this problem, you can install a foam weather strip and then use a wider ridge capping.



Photos: Rob Potts



What else can you do?



Use water. Sometimes a spray from a hose or sprinkler can deter kea, but never use high-powered water jets that could harm them.



Leave an outside light on at night – kea don't like bright lights and may move on.



Report any sick or injured kea immediately by calling **0800 DOC HOT** (0800 362 468) or emailing the Kea Conservation Trust.

What shouldn't you do?



Don't use strong-smelling ointments like Deep Heat or Vicks VapoRub as a deterrent as they could attract kea.



Avoid using fine-gauge chicken wire as the kea will likely chew right through it with their sharp bills.



NEVER hurt kea. They are a protected species and it is illegal to harm them.

If you're having trouble with kea

The Kea Conservation Trust and Department of Conservation are not responsible for paying for any damage kea cause to your property.

If you need support with managing kea at your property, please contact the Kea Conservation Trust or your local Department of Conservation office.

Kea Conservation Trust

WEBPAGE: keaconservation.co.nz

EMAIL: info@keaconservation.nz



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