

What is poisoning our birds?

By Lyn Uhlmann

THE RSPCA Queensland is appealing for public help to find the person or people it suspects has poisoned at least 25 animals in Cleveland since June 16.

The majority of the affected animals have been crows or magpies but a black-faced cuckoo shrike and a native rat were also allegedly poisoned, with 22 of the 25 animals dying.

Animal welfare experts were alerted to the situation when several birds, mostly crows, were found dead or showing signs of poisoning in the vicinity of the Redland City Council car park in Doig Street, Cleveland on June 16.

Since then, dead birds have been found in the area weekly.

Brisbane Bird and Exotics Vet Service veterinarian Dr Deborah Monks, who initially tended to the birds, said necropsies performed on three of the dead birds suggested they had been poisoned.

She said she believed a piece of minced meat found near the birds also contained poison.

RSPCA spokesperson Michael Beatty said the mince, plus a crow found dead in the area at the same time, were subsequently sent to the Department of Employment, Econom-



UNDER ATTACK: Pelican and Seabird Rescue vice president Nat Forrest with a crow that was poisoned in the Cleveland area last month. The bird was successfully rehabilitated and released but 24 other animals have since been poisoned, with 22 of them dying.

ic Development and Innovation for analysis.

The laboratory reports indicated "very high levels" of the organophosphate pesticide Fenthion were found in the meat and "significant levels" of Fenthion were also found in the bird's liver and gastrointestinal tract.

RSPCA Qld bayside inspector Joanne Warnock described the animal deaths as

"very disturbing".

"Other native wildlife is obviously at risk, as are domestic pets and even small children," she said.

"Crows and magpies are protected species so those responsible face fines and imprisonment under the Nature Conservation Act as well as the Animal Care and Protection Act."

Redland City Council Chief Executive Officer Gary Stevenson said the

council took the matter of animal welfare seriously.

"While council is very concerned, legislated responsibility for harm to native animals belongs primarily to DERM, although the RSPCA can also be involved in subsequent prosecution under protection of animals legislation," Mr Stevenson said.

"In response to this issue, DERM has organised a meeting this week involving all key stakeholders to outline future action.

"A Redland City Council wildlife extension officer has continued to liaise with the relevant stakeholders since the first incident was reported and has assisted with toxicology testing of the poisoned birds."

Mr Stevenson said the council was strongly opposed to the unlawful baiting of animals.

He urged members of the public to be aware and take due care around the sites in question and encouraged parents to ensure children were well supervised.

Anyone with information that could help investigators can contact the RSPCA's animal cruelty hotline on 1300 852 188 or Crime Stoppers on 1300 888 333.