



for birds  
for people  
for ever



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

The pink-footed goose is a small, brown goose with pink legs, a small black and pink bill and a distinctive grey forewing in flight.

*Internationally-important numbers of pink-footed geese now spend the winter in the UK. In the 1960s, only 50,000 birds wintered in the UK – now there are more than 200,000. There are regularly more than 100,000 pink-footed geese in north Norfolk and the Broads. They feed in the arable farmland on post-harvest cereal stubbles, sugar beet tops and winter wheat crops. Damage to crops can be minimised with careful management.*

## WHAT DO PINK-FOOTED GEESE NEED?

### Undisturbed daytime feeding sites

Pink-footed geese are highly susceptible to human disturbance. Research suggests that they avoid feeding in fields less than 6 hectares (ha) in size and fields that are close to roads. Shooting disturbs the geese more and disperses them over a wide area, often onto vulnerable crops.

### A supply of carbohydrate-rich food

In mid-winter, most geese prefer food with high levels of carbohydrates and/or nitrogen and low levels of fibre. Sugar beet tops and spilled grain in stubble fields are ideal. Stubble fields are only available to the geese in autumn and early winter, before they are ploughed.

Harvested sugar beet fields are the preferred feeding sites during the rest of the winter. Pink-footed geese also feed on improved grassland, ideally near their night-time roost sites.

## HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE PINK-FOOTED GEESE?

### Avoid disturbing geese feeding on sugar beet tops

- Disturbing geese whilst they are feeding on harvested sugar beet fields can result in moving the birds onto growing crops. It is best to avoid walking on these fields, or travelling through them in all-terrain vehicles. Please avoid shooting geese as they feed.
- Target goose management measures on larger fields (>6 ha) away from major roads and on fields that you know are traditionally used by geese.

### Leave sugar beet tops as long as possible

- Pink-footed geese prefer to feed on post-harvest sugar beet tops. They will graze on harvested sugar beet fields for up to 30 days after harvest. So, where possible, avoid ploughing in sugar beet tops directly after harvest to sow a winter cereal. Consider growing a spring-sown cereal instead.
- Avoid using sheep to graze on the sugar beet aftermath if you are planning to carry out goose management on these fields.

### Avoid partial harvesting of sugar beet fields

- Partial harvesting of sugar beet fields can give pink-footed geese access to unharvested sugar beet roots. Where possible, try to harvest fields completely and avoid harvesting strips through fields.

## PRIORITY ACTION

- Avoid disturbing geese feeding on sugar beet tops
- Leave sugar beet tops on the field surface for as long as possible
- Target goose management measures on large fields away from roads
- Over-wintered stubbles can be funded by agri-environment schemes

## HOW CAN I DETER GEESE FROM SENSITIVE CROPS?

- Avoid shooting at geese feeding on sensitive crops as this can disperse the geese over a wider area, often onto other vulnerable crops.
- If geese are grazing vulnerable crops, walking out onto the field is often enough to move them on – providing that there are suitable, undisturbed fields available nearby.
- Scarecrows, large fertiliser sacks and farm machinery (eg bowsers) have been used successfully to deter geese from settling on vulnerable crops.

You can get further information on these and other ways of managing your farm for wildlife from:



RSPB regional farmland adviser,  
Eastern England Regional Office, Stalham  
House, 65 Thorpe Road, Norwich, Norfolk  
NR1 1UD Tel: 01603 661662  
E-mail: easternfarmlandadvice@rspb.org.uk



British Sugar plc  
Oundle Road  
Peterborough PE2 9QU  
Tel: 01733 563171  
E-mail: info@britishsugar.co.uk



English Nature, Norfolk team,  
60 Bracondale, Norwich, Norfolk NR1 2BE  
Tel: 01603 598400  
E-mail: norfolk@english-nature.org.uk