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State-wide Review of NSW Pest Animal
Management – Draft Report
Natural Resources Commission
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Many Hands, One Voice

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Submission to the State-wide review of NSW Pest Animal Management Draft Report

Landcare NSW commends the Natural Resources Commission on not only the detail and standard of the Pest Animal Management Review - Draft Report, but also the consultation process utilised throughout this review. As previously highlighted by Landcare NSW, pest animal management is a multi-faceted and complex issue that requires local ownership, community participation, coordinated action and continual review and adaptation of programs in order to have a lasting effect in minimising impacts from pest animals.

Noting that a number of Landcare networks have submitted their own response, the following submission provides a general overview as well as feedback on a number of recommendations from the Draft Report

Landcare NSW thanks the Natural Resources Commission for the opportunity to provide input.

Yours Faithfully,



Rob Dulhunty
Chair, Landcare NSW

Email: chair@Landcarensw.org.au

Attachment: Submission to the State-wide Review of NSW Pest Animal Management – Draft Report

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Prepared with input from and on behalf of Landcare NSW

By Green Gully Consulting

For further details please contact

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Overview & Key Points

As summarised in the Pest Animal Management Review, Draft Report *“People are the cornerstone of successful pest management”* and it is *“essential to empower all landholders to own the problem of pest animals and work together”*. The key to achieving a number of recommendations in the Draft Report is to coordinate and leverage individual investment. In order for landscape scale pest management to be successful it requires collaborative community action. It is therefore imperative that genuine community involvement occurs in the planning, decision making, delivery and review of pest animal control.

As with most recommendations the most limiting factor is resourcing. Landcare has experience in delivering pest animal management programs for a range of pest animal species, both independently and in partnership with government, industry and community organisations. Landcare also has the networks, relationships, history and skills to leverage investment and facilitate local ownership and coordinated action for landscape scale pest animal management. However, for this volunteer effort to be effective it must be nurtured, resourced and empowered to be involved in pest animal programs that address sustainable agriculture and natural resource management issues at the local scale.

Responses to the Specific Recommendations

Value of Strengthened governance and planning

3. Provide regional leadership and local delivery of pest management

Landcare NSW supports the establishment of multi-stakeholder pest animal management committees that include industry and community representation. Landcare NSW recommends a transparent merit based selection process be utilised to identify suitable representatives for these committees rather than direct appointment. It is essential that the pest animal management committee represents the multiple needs of community, industry and government. Local Land Services and provisions under the *Local Land Services Act 2013* are best suited to guide the governance of the pest animal management committees however the delivery of the pest animal management committees and associated products is a collaborative effort and it is imperative that there is equal ownership, responsibility and value placed on all participating committee

members/representatives. The regional pest animal management committees should be a forum for open and honest discussions to allow for true collaboration and to facilitate solutions to local and regional pest animal issues.

The regional pest animal management committees should support a whole of government, industry and community approach to pest management in the region as well as be utilised as a community of practice for developing skills and knowledge and a forum for cooperation, information sharing and problem solving.

It is vitally important that local landholder groups be acknowledged and supported for their pest animal management actions and are involved in ongoing monitoring and decision making processes for pest animal management. In many regions landholder groups have initiated and continually implemented pest animal management programs as government organisations have come and gone. It is therefore important that future programs acknowledge these actions in order to maintain landholder participation and support the engagement of new land managers in landscape scale pest animal management.

Most rural Landcare networks play an active role in pest animal management and have experience in engaging land managers in control programs, disseminating best practice information and coordinating collective action. There is benefit in reviewing pest animal management activities already occurring within each region, identifying what is working well, lessons learnt and how to add value to existing programs. In many cases, investing in existing programs and providing resources to help address the gaps may be more beneficial and supportive of shared ownership and shared responsibility, rather than initiating new pest animal management programs, at a greater cost and the risk of disengaging participating land managers.

Improved engagement and education

11. Support and coordinate local on-ground action

The regional pest management coordinator position should be externally advertised with the successful applicant selected utilising a merit based selection process.

The regional pest management coordinator should be guided by the regional pest animal management committees and also be a conduit for information sharing between land managers and service providers.

A number of areas throughout NSW are highly experienced in managing pest animals at a landscape scale. Many Landcare networks are skilled in delivering pest animal control programs for a number of species including foxes, feral cats, wild dogs, feral pigs and feral goats. With resourcing, Landcare networks can add value to pest animal management programs and government activities by engaging community members and supporting both public and private land managers.

In many regions there are existing partnerships, landholder and community groups, industry networks and relationships. It is important that these efforts are acknowledged and supported to build on existing activities and experiences. Significant volunteer efforts that are often not recognised to their true value occur to manage pest animals. These volunteer efforts can be leveraged by providing resourcing for coordination and support at the local and regional level. In some areas this may be through resourcing existing partnerships, programs and networks as well as developing new initiatives.

12. Promote shared responsibility for pest management across the community, industry and government

“Shared responsibility” also means shared decision making, shared ownership, shared monitoring and shared action. In order for this to be successful respect, acknowledgement, commitment and understanding between all parties is imperative. Land managers and the broader community should be encouraged to monitor and communicate pest animal impacts, observations, trends and concerns. In order to maintain shared responsibility and collective action useful and constructive guidance and assistance needs to be provided in return.

Assistance and guidance may be provided through a variety of forums including but not limited to on-ground support, training and skill development, useful feedback as to what is occurring in the region e.g. trends, referral to additional best practice information and support in coordinating individual control efforts.

Information provided by land managers and the community should be utilised by the regional pest animal committees to guide local and regional pest animal programs and management efforts.

With appropriate and sufficient resourcing, Landcare can provide support to volunteers and land managers and assist the community to coordinate individual control efforts and identify local issues. Landcare can also add value to landscape scale pest animal management through disseminating best practice information and regionally specific advice, engaging land managers in control programs and supporting landscape scale citizen science monitoring activities through forums such as FeralScan.

A number of community organisations including Landcare have extensive community networks and staff with facilitation and landholder liaison skills. Landcare has a long history of developing and implementing education and capacity building programs both in partnership with other organisations and independently. Including Landcare in the planning of education and capacity building programs and utilising the networks and skills of Landcare throughout NSW in program delivery would leverage investment whilst also maximising outcomes.

Changes to legislation and regulations

16. Manage deer as a pest animal

Poisoning has long been recognised as a significant control tool in order to achieve broadscale knockdown of pest animal populations. In addition to removing deer from the NSW *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002* investment in the identification of an efficient toxin and the registration of a toxin for the control of feral deer in NSW would aid in achieving landscape scale reduction in feral deer populations and their associated impacts.

17. Manage feral cats as a pest animal

There is no registered toxin for feral cat control in NSW. Research has shown that cats are very susceptible to 1080 poison and the Invasive Animals CRC has shown through collaring research that feral cats have been killed during wild dog baiting campaigns following the consumption of 1080 poisoned baits. Registration of 1080 as an approved poison for feral cat control in NSW would aid in achieving broadscale knockdown of feral cat numbers and reduce feral cat impacts.

Landcare through adequate resourcing can assist in the engagement of landholders and the broader community in education campaigns to raise the awareness of the risks posed by stray and feral cats and the promotion of responsible pet ownership.

Improved management

20. Reduce the impact of feral horses

Feral horse management is a very emotive issue. Australia has a long association with feral horses

(Brumby's) and as such they have significant heritage value that most individuals can appreciate. The impacts of feral horses especially in ecologically sensitive areas are less known. The delivery of a targeted educational campaign highlighting the impacts from feral horses especially in iconic environmental areas would aid in increasing community understanding and knowledge of this issue. Landcare networks could be utilised to disseminate information and share knowledge throughout the community regarding feral horse management.

21. Adopt and resource a strategic risk based approach to managing urban and peri-urban pest animals

Landcare has a long history in delivering programs in urban and peri-urban environments. A number of Landcare networks throughout NSW already manage Indian Myna control programs in these environments including the delivery of knowledge and skill building activities, such as trap and Indian Myna proof nest box construction workshops, information sessions on how to maximise trapping success and animal welfare standards and humane destruction of trapped birds through the utilisation of carbon dioxide gas.

With resourcing, Landcare can continue to deliver these programs as well as coordinate and support the efforts of volunteers to monitor and undertake collective pest animal control in urban, peri-urban and rural environments.

These supported networks, partnerships and programs can be utilised to monitor and undertake control for a variety of pest animals; including feral cats, foxes and wild dogs that are becoming more of an issue in urban and peri-urban environments.

The knowledge and skills of Landcare can be utilised to leverage investment in the management of urban and peri-urban pest animals through collaboration with Local Government, organisations and community groups.

22. Actively engage recreational hunting groups in regional pest animal management

Although integration of control options delivers the most effective outcome for pest management, shooting is best utilised as a mop up tool or in specific circumstances. It is not a tool that will result in broadscale population knockdown and in some circumstances can be detrimental to pest animal control efforts, e.g. hunting of feral pigs (can disperse individuals) when undertaking free feeding as a part of a 1080 poisoning program.

Shooting can be incorporated into pest animal management programs for the removal of residual individuals after a broadscale program, the removal of specific animals in contained situations or for utilisation in areas where other control options can not be used.

23. Reduce red tape surrounding recreational hunting on private land

Recreational hunting is as the term implies “recreational”. Shooting can be utilised strategically in pest animal management programs for the removal of specific animals, removal of residual animals following a broadscale program or for utilisation in areas where other control options can not be used.

In order to have an impact on pest animals 70-80% of their population needs to be removed annually in order to counteract the rate of reinvasion and recruitment through breeding. Recreational hunting can not achieve these results and therefore can not constitute control.

It is essential that codes of practice and standard operating procedures for the shooting of pest animals are adhered to and that humane destruction of all animals occurs. A register of professional shooters would aid in ensuring that these standards are maintained and provide landholders with some assurance that shooters have the adequate skills, ethics and experience to undertake strategic pest animal control through shooting.

30. Provide adequate resources to deliver effective pest animal management

Landscape scale pest animal control is reliant on the coordinated action of individual volunteers (landholders). The resourcing to support the efforts of volunteer pest animal control groups is often overlooked or inadequate. Whilst the private investment in pest animal management made by individual landholders and pest animal control groups is often underestimated.

With adequate resourcing, community organisations such as Landcare can leverage both private investment and government funding by providing coordination support to maximise the efforts of individuals so that regional outcomes can be achieved. Landcare has a strong history in enabling and empowering landholders and community groups to contribute their local private investment to regional outcomes that benefit the broader community.

Providing resourcing to support and aid in the coordination of these groups across a region would support shared ownership, shared responsibility and maximise pest animal management outcomes at the landscape scale.