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Submission to Natural Resources Commission's draft pest animal management review from Rewilding Australia Incorporated.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Natural Resources Commission's draft pest animal management review.

Rewilding Australia key region of interest is south eastern Australia, and is developing strategies to improve the outlook of three species currently or historically found within this region; the eastern quoll (*Dasyurus viverrinus*) the spotted-tailed quoll (*Dasyurus maculatus*) and the Tasmanian devil (*Sarcophilus harrisii*). Correspondingly, the red fox is probably the greatest pest animal threat to the long-term survival of these species. Thus, a primary focus for Rewilding Australia is on improving the control of foxes across this region. Using native species as a catalyst for improving community engagement is also a key area of interest for Rewilding Australia. Improving the management of cats will also help to improve the outlook for wildlife in NSW.

As an initial comment, the **Executive Summary** of the review identified the sound practices that have been developed out of extensive research and on-ground knowledge built to date. With regard to fox control; this involves baiting and shooting. Rewilding Australia agrees with the review that the ongoing challenge for fox control using baiting and shooting is mostly about sustaining landholder effort and funding across seasons. Rewilding Australia also agrees with the review, that this effort must be maintained while maintaining research to identify the next game-changing control method, such as biocontrol. Rewilding Australia has however, identified a disconnect between this statement and the recommendations proposed by the review in developing such a biocontrol for foxes, or alternative methods of bait delivery that would improve target specificity and lower the cost per bait uptake.

Rewilding Australia's Review of the Recommendations

6.3 Reducing the risks from cats

Regarding Recommendation 17(vi,vii): to Manage cats as a pest animal.

Rewilding Australia's Recommendation: The NSW Government should also revise the NSW Companion Animal Act to prohibit domestic cats roam outside their owners' property. This change would bring domestic cats in line with the requirements placed on dog owners and would facilitate a paradigm shift in the attitude that currently sees the majority of cat owners allowing their cat to roam outside their property.

7.7 Conservation and pest management collaboration

Community engagement for pest management can be greatly improved if the goal of pest management has an easily identifiable practical benefit. In some communities this benefit is not readily identifiable.

A significant engagement tool that pest managers can be achieved via the use of a native species that is threatened by a pest animal. For example, the brush-tailed rock wallaby population in Kangaroo Valley is threatened with extinction as a result of predation by cats and foxes. Using the rock wallaby as a catalyst species, in which to engage the local community into supporting and participating in fox control (and domestic cat containment) has been very effective.

Further, the reintroduction of a species into a region may also be an effective mechanism to ignite community engagement in a region that would otherwise have no perceived benefit in controlling pest animals.

Regarding Recommendation 12(i): Promote shared responsibility for pest management across the community, industry and government.

Rewilding Australia's Recommendation: Place a greater emphasis on Ecosystem Restoration or 'Rewilding' in pest animal management programs that require community engagement.

Rewilding Australia sees an increased role for ecologists and organisations participating in in-situ conservation for participating in the development and ongoing coordination of community pest management programs that are complimented by native species protection or a species recovery program.

8.2 Setting effective research priorities

Whilst the control of foxes using baiting, is often seen as an effective control tool by pest managers working across a single land tenure (e.g. a National Park or State Forest) the practical reality of fox control across much of NSW is a range of smaller, often competing land use types with correspondingly smaller-scale fox control programs that are often intermittent or bi-annual, and which are subject to rapid fox reinvasion upon their conclusion. The current control methods available (baiting and shooting) perform exceedingly poorly in these circumstances and are often cost and time inefficient in this context.

The absence of the red fox from commitment to *developing and evaluating cost-effective and humane control techniques* underplays the significant role of the fox in local declines and extinctions in south eastern NSW.

Regarding Recommendation 26(iv), to expand research capabilities.

Rewilding Australia's Recommendation: The fox should be added to the list of species funded under any pest animal research program, with an emphasis on developing biological controls for foxes (fertility/immunocontracteptive and/or viral).

This would have the added benefit of reducing the reliance on cost and time inefficient control methods of shooting and baiting as well as improving the target specificity of fox control.

Summary of Rewilding Australia's Recommendations

Recommendation 17(vi,vii): to Manage cats as a pest animal.

Rewilding Australia's Recommendation: The NSW Government should also revise the NSW Companion Animal Act to prohibit domestic cats roam outside their owners' property.

Recommendation 12(i): Promote shared responsibility for pest management across the community, industry and government.

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Recommendation 26(iv), to Expand research capabilities.

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