

Submission to the NRC Draft Report for the Pest Animal Management Review.

In making this submission to the NRC Draft Report for the Pest Animal Management Review, I draw on my knowledge and experience accumulated through eight years as Wild Dog Control Spokesman for NSW Farmers Association.

During that time I developed a wide range of contacts both farmer and agency people, spread along the tablelands, coast and Great Dividing Range from Victoria to Queensland as well as landholders in the Western Division.

A range of issues need to be addressed, including the emerging role of LLS, the need for major Government funding, the management of current Schedule 2 Land regardless of it being retained or deleted and the importance of local community control plans in an overall regional approach.

The future role of LLS

Under the LHPA system some areas had reasonable control of pest animals, while other areas had a fragmented approach or very little control at all. The most successful system I observed in NSW was in the South East LHPA area where wild dogs were a major issue.

The system in that area evolved over several decades and was driven by intense community involvement, which led to cooperation from public land managers and the development of full time employed Pest Animal Controllers (PAC's). These PAC's are financed 80% by NPWS and 20% by LHPA, with LHPA responsible for the daily administration of the trappers. The system has now been taken over by the LLS, with a senior ranger in charge. The PAC's cover a range of pest animals, cooperating with farmers controlling wild pigs and foxes and work with NPWS trapping wild cats. Their approach to control a range of pest animals deliver an environmental outcome as well as the economic and social outcome so necessary for the farming community in that region as over 50% of the area is public land.

The senior LLS ranger in charge of the PAC's is carrying out the role of a Pest Animal Manager/Coordinator in the region. This makes wild dog control in the south east region much more efficient and effective than a coordinator working outside of the LLS system and financed from another source.

It is essential that the LLS system adopt the application of a Pest Animal Manager in each of its regions to work cooperatively and in a positive manner with community pest animal control groups. In the south east region the farmers are very involved in their wild dog control plans, and attend their meetings on a regular basis. The best example of a successful control plan in that area would be the South Coast Monaro Plan. More information on how the system operates can be obtained from the "Wild Dog Management South East LLS Region Strategy."

Not all LLS regions will require the amount of Government funding through NPWS that the South East LLS requires. For instance the Central West LLS region is using a part time trapper when necessary, and in such regions as Central West the LLS Pest Manager Coordinator may spend more time working on wild pig and rabbit control. However along the Great Dividing Range there is a need for up to 40 full time PAC's to get on top of an ever increasing wild dog problem.

There is no way LLS ratepayers could afford the cost of containing the continual spread of wild dog predation, so Government is going to have to meet the majority of the cost.

The Western Division is another story again. The logistics of huge pastoral areas and a light producer population there will have to be a Government subsidy to control pest animals and by so doing maintain the livestock industries in the Western Division.

I fully support NRC recommendation 15b – “Include mandatory measures for pest control across tenures as required.”

Lifestylers love the joys of living in the bush, but so many of them do not realise the responsibilities of land ownership. Within 3 ½ to 4 hours of Sydney there are significant areas of land owned by absentee owners. Many of them do not cooperate in coordinated pest animal control programs.

Across tenure pest control mandatory measures are very necessary, and possibly many of them may change their ways once they have been billed for pest control carried out on their land.

The Management of Schedule 2 Land.

I believe there is a debate going on in bureaucratic circles as to whether the imposition of Schedule 2 Land should be retained or deleted.

Whether it is retained or deleted it is crucial that the wild dog population in those areas is kept to a sustainable level so the wild dogs live on the native wildlife rather than domestic livestock.

Public land managers need to realise and learn that if their livestock, i.e. wild dogs reach unsustainable numbers they must cull their numbers, in a similar manner that livestock producers must keep selling their surplus livestock before they get overstocked.

The only way this wild dog management can be achieved is by baiting and trapping into Schedule 2 land. I do not agree with the NRC Draft Report, Recommendation 18 that “include provisions for the management of wild dogs on the perimeter of National Parks where they have negative impacts and allow for dingo conservation inside National Parks.”

On page 47 of NRC Report I note that Australian taxpayers pay the lowest level of subsidies to their agriculture sector of any taxpayers worldwide. If these taxpayers want dingo conservation to occur in Schedule 2 Land it is necessary that the public pay the majority of the cost of maintaining 40 full time employed PAC's under LLS administration, to keep the wild dogs to a

sustainable level in Schedule 2, and eradicate them from Schedule 1 land where they have been allowed to spread due to NPWS mismanagement of their native livestock!

Aerial baiting will always be a major weapon in wild dog control, however the integrated system of baiting and trapping is necessary for farmers to be able to continue to run sheep alongside National Parks where dingoes are present such as the Great Dividing Range. Once a dog starts to predate on sheep and calves, baiting will seldom fix the problem, so a PAC is essential to remove the killer dog.

Maps of Schedule 2 Land show special areas such as the Sydney Catchment Authority land in the Lake Burragorang and Warragamba Dam catchment where no wild dog baiting is allowed. Such areas need PAC's to reduce dog numbers. Wild dogs from these areas spread west and affect farmers on the tablelands. The area east of Taralga is a stark example of this, as there has been major destocking of sheep due to wild dog predation.

In summary it is paramount that the LLS must be made to work for farmers. That LLS Pest Animal Managers/Coordinators work closely and positively with local wild dog control associations and other pest animal groups such as deer control. The LLS Pest Animal Managers/Coordinators will play a major role in pest control and must be capable of working with local community groups. I have seen in the past where many community groups have been brow beaten and virtually dismissed by Government agency representatives leading to very negative outcomes for some rural communities.

There will be a need for major Government funding for full time employment of PAC's.

The prime lamb and wool industry plays a significant role in the economic life of rural NSW. Without a positive approach by LLS to get on top of pest animal problems NSW will go downhill like Queensland has with its sheep population now below 3 million from a high of 27 million.

Other Pests.

I have had no experience with the deer problem. Listening to speakers at the Tamworth meeting it is obvious deer needs to be declared a pest animal. However the management of shooters needs a lot of work and thought put into it. Previously under Game Council shooters caused a lot of problems for private landowners especially for those with property adjoining public land.

Wild Horses or Brumbies.

I can understand the attachment many people have for the Brumby and their concern and anguish over the aerial shooting episode. Another aspect of that contentious system of control is the very likely population explosion in fox and wild dog numbers feeding on the carcasses.

I am certain there is a pool of experienced horsemen available who would be willing to muster these livestock down into valleys and eventually into holding paddocks and yards where they could be commercially utilised.

It would require the right person to approach the right people and a sensible system of management worked out. It is not impossible and what could become a major distressing issue could be handled in a sensible and diplomatic way.

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