



## State-wide review of NSW pest animal management

### SUBMISSION

Bite the Bullet is a NSW based animal welfare organisation focused on small and exotic pets in Australia. Our sole purpose is to educate the public on responsible pet ownership and to enforce the ethical and humane treatment of these animals.

We do not condone pest animal management as we understand the need for invasive species control. Our cause however, obligates us to encourage that this be achieved in the most humane manner possible. The Australian public are generally opposed to animal cruelty of any sort, and this includes pest animals. Majority will share our views that invasive animal management is of great priority to preserve the Australian environment, but wish to see such projects approached ethically. Not only to alleviate the suffering of animals, but also to address any work place and safety issues that resolute to those involved in the execution of invasive species control tasks.

#### Humane control methods.

Regarding wild rabbit populations, the current control methods are frowned upon by the general public, welfare groups, animal professionals and policies need to be reviewed. Issues include the use of biological control agents, the practice of fumigation, baiting and warren ripping. These practices are inhumane and create unnecessary suffering to targeted rabbits.

#### **Biological control agents.**

Myxomatosis, calicivirus and the new K5 virus (to be released next year) are classified as inhumane by veterinary professionals and should be eradicated. The use of these diseases creates panic and distress to domestic pet rabbit owners and results in the unnecessary euthanasia of family pets as the viruses do not compromise in regards to domestic and feral animals. We are opposed to any form of control that effects companion rabbits and imposes a threat to domestic pets.

#### **Immunocontraception.**

We believe funding should be placed into long term solutions such as immunocontraception. The funding for this project ceased in 2005 and the CSIRO have not implemented any further research for reasons we are unaware of.

The Government have placed an amount of 1.2 million dollars towards the release of the K5 virus. In

short, this will not stop the breeding cycle, but ultimately act as a 'bandaid effect' in regards to feral rabbit control as previous biological control agents have similarly done so.

Re-introducing the immunocontraception plan will reduce the birth rate of litters and as such, reduce the population of wild rabbits. As far as we know, this poses no health threats to rabbits and is a humane way of reducing numbers.

We believe this project should be funded for animal welfare benefits as well as an ongoing solution to Australia's feral rabbit issues.

#### **Mandatory desexing & microchipping.**

In regards to what the Government defines as 'pest animals' being kept as companion pets, we'd like to address the need for updated laws and policies. Due to uneducated pet purchases in NSW, many pet rabbits are abandoned and dumped. Introducing a mandatory desexing policy will ultimately reduce impulse buying, thus decrease the amount of unwanted pet rabbits being let go into the wild. Microchipping will also be of benefit, as any lost or escaped pet rabbits can be returned to their rightful owners. If deemed appropriate, a fine can be issued.

The current NSW animal registry does not allow small or exotic pets to be registered within the state. Anyone wishing to register their exotic pet in NSW must be done so through *Central Animal Records (CAR)*, located in Victoria.

As a leading state, NSW should implement an updated or conjoined registry to allow for exotic pet registration for known benefits such as, returning lost animals home, reducing euthanasia rates in pounds and shelters and enforcing responsibility to owners.

#### **OH&S Workplace safety.**

As part of our research, we have investigated the impacts of euthanasia and culling on employees and workers within the animal industry. We refer to US findings and information found in the *Caring Killing Paradox: Euthanasia-Related Strain Among Animal Shelter Workers*. This is related to what is known as compassion fatigue in workers, which ultimately leads to mental health issues within the given industry. We are currently investigating this issue.

More information about the listed topics can be found on our website:

[www.bitethebulletanimalrights.com](http://www.bitethebulletanimalrights.com)

Should you have any questions or queries regarding this submission, please feel free to contact us.

Regards,

Laura. N. Gillett



**Bite the Bullet.**