

Comments on NRC State –wide review of NSW pest management – Lex Welham, SSAA Illawarra
Responses to Questions provided in red.

Roles and responsibilities

1. Are roles and responsibilities for pest animal management clear at the state, regional or local scales?
The responsibilities tabulated list a large number of groups all with budgetary constraints, and with varying degrees of enthusiasm in carrying out the required task. The general public is regarded as a hindrance to pest reporting, as many will think of animals as being lovely until their own property or vehicle is impacted.
2. What works well with the current institutional arrangements? Where are the examples of good institutional arrangements for pest animal management?
The hunting of pest animals in NSW Forests is a well-considered and managed operation whereby recreational hunters can help manage pests. The training, experience and documentary procedures require the listing of hunters, vehicles, and any dogs, and allow for the occasional policing of the activities by Forest Service Staff and the Police. Hunters are provided with maps of permissible areas, and are required to carry a GPS or equivalent to ensure they know their location. The compulsory animals sighted / killed return is to be submitted before the hunter can apply for another shoot.
3. What is the appropriate level (state/regional/local) for delivery of pest animal management functions such as planning, enforcement, education etc?
The state authority should have an oversight role, and promote education, with regional authorities managing the land approvals and enforcement.
4. What arrangements can enable issues to be managed at the appropriate scale for efficiency and effectiveness?
Regional authorities need to provide the land information as to access, where pests are, and where other activities / environmental controls dictate that pest management is inappropriate
5. What are the triggers for government intervention in pest management? When is it the Government's role to intervene in pest animal management?
The Government should become involved when land managers consider that the pest problem is not able to be managed by their own methods, and also using qualified volunteers. Government involvement need not be active work in the field, but may be political involvement to try and change the views or authority of objectors or regulations which may be restricting the potential success of certain operations
5. Are current compliance and enforcement arrangements effective, if not, why not?
DPI Forest compliance officers have checked me in a forest, and were courteous and helpful. Poaching will always happen, but the response of licensed hunters to report illegal activities, and the use of trail cameras at some access roads will help manage illegal activities.
6. How can accountability and performance monitoring for pest management be improved?
The current science-based monitoring trial of the NPWS Volunteer scheme will provide data which cannot be refuted by those against pest destruction – both must be extremely expensive. Future accountability could be managed by putting a value on a skin part of a pest, and be an incentive to achieve a tally of pests rather than trophies
7. Has anything worked well in the past but can no longer do so because of limited resources?
No comment

Shared ownership

1. What do you consider good practice for encouraging community-based pest management and changing landholder practices?

Existing farmer / hunter relationships should be encouraged & maintain, but the formation of new relationships requires a sporting body to accredit and vouch for the integrity of hunters, to overcome the current security and privacy concerns of landowners, arising from property and livestock theft – an example of this is SSAA's Farmer Assist program which operates in several states, and is due to commence shortly. The Nepean Hunters Club has a similar program whereby bookings for members on private properties is accompanied by a form from the club, with property and hunter / vehicle details which is handed over to the landowner before hunting commences. Club members are responsible for the on-going access to the property.
2. Are there better ways to promote community understanding of pest management?

Recently, the media have gradually began reporting on the effects of pests on the native flora and fauna. Increased sensational stories about the impacts of feral animals and exotic plants should help wear down the antis, but still won't stop the lazy and apathetic rubbish and pet dumpers.
3. Do you feel that the current education/awareness programs are working? Why? Why not?

There seems to be a gradual but minor change in public opinion regarding the need to manage pests in the environment. We need more media reports of cute native animals, and perhaps recognition that some might be permissible as pets, rather than cats and rabbits and the like.
4. At what scale (local, regional, state) are awareness-raising programs most effective?

A national and state based program is required to get the rural message through to the environmentally detached city dwellers.
5. How can community-based pest management programs be better aligned to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of effort?

Local land authorities could address sporting shooter groups to explain the rationale of pest destruction as opposed to trophy hunting, to get shooters who are prepared to work hard within the forest / parks to remove as many animals as possible – permitting the recovery of meat for resale would provide a financial incentive, and offset the concern of many about not being able to recover carcasses. Emphasis strictly on pests.
6. Do industry bodies need to be better engaged to enable more collaborative approaches? If so, how?

The larger the number of bodies could lead to more empire building and mistrust of particular agenda.
7. Are there opportunities for improved data collection and sharing with industry and the broader community?

The kill / sighting return is likely to be the best form of data back from the hunter, but doesn't include the area or distance

covered, or the mode of covering the area.

Spotlight counts on specified traverses, and sighting reports from the land manager seem to be the best intermediate source of data. The more rigorous science based scat counts and vegetation impact studies can support the other data, but would be reliant of government funding or enthusiastic volunteers to be carried out.

8. How can sufficient engagement be encouraged from all landholders regardless of land use?

The hunters need to be represented and managed by a responsible and credible organisation, and have to show a high level of discipline in regards to safety and respect for the property and the environment.

Government authorities will need to agree on a common-sense means of managing pest destruction while the land may be used by others. Matters such as encouraging more concentrated areas for public recreation and providing signs / advertising that the land is the site of operations.

Public landowners should have a mechanism to alert adjoining private landowners of activities, and indicate contact details of supportive owners on the maps provided to the hunter with a permission slip, in order that targeted pests do not escape through a fence. The additional responsibility on the hunter would need to be documented, with appropriate remedies in the case of infringement.

Priority pest species

1. Within the defined parameters of the ToR, which pest animals do you think the review should focus on and why?

All the species have impacts on various environments. The damaging species which are obvious to hunters are: pigs, foxes, goats and dogs which can be encountered in many locations. Cats should be shot when the opportunity arises, but hunters could be encouraged to set some humane traps for cats when in an area, and dispose of any caught.

Goats can be driven and mustered with the assistance of adjoining landowners, but camels and horses would best be managed by aerial means.

2. What criteria should be used for prioritising pest species?

The impact of certain pests on plant or animal members of endangered environments should determine the priority in a particular region.

3. How should the prevention of new or emerging species be prioritised over the management of established species?

New and emerging species management /prevention would need to be handled by experts who can identify these species at the source.

4. How can future risks be incorporated into the prioritisation decision process?

Future risks / pest species may be incorporated by their inclusion on a list of pests, with an advice sheet regarding management prepared by experts in the government departments

Landscape approach

1. How can strategic and coordinated planning for pest management across tenures be improved?
Cooperation between land managers, with the support of interested user groups
2. Should pest animal management activities be coordinated by species or by locality? Or is there a spatial scale at which both can be integrated?
Certain pests will need to be managed by poisoning / trapping by accredited contractor, and mustering of other species. Hunters may best be used to help with species such as pigs and deer, plus residue / opportunistic shooting of other species which have been professional targeted. (NPWS trial model)
3. What arrangements are needed to ensure early intervention of pest animal management?
Recognition of the problem by the land manager / owner, and prompt contact with professional or volunteer organisations for assistance.
4. Are the social aspects (i.e. education, networks), adequately considered in pest animal management programs?
Volunteer hunter program by SSAA covers valuable material, and the safety procedures and briefing and direction by NPWS clearly explains the environmental benefit to the volunteers. This background input, and the appreciation gained of the particular environment would not be gained without the input from NPWS staff. Reduced restrictions, and allowing hunters to concentrate on apparently productive areas might significantly reduce the pest population in localised areas, but would not have the wide ranging opportunistic pest reduction currently achieved by the present high mileage procedures.
5. Adaptive management relies on data/feedback of information to make improvements – how can the reliability of this data be ensured?
Reliable data from unsupervised pest destruction requires the presentation of ears/ tail, rather than just numbers on a form. Some form of location description on the kill / sighting return would allow a crude confirmation with trends in future sightings reports
6. Should the management of pest animals and pest plants be integrated? At what scale should integration occur? Local, regional state?
Recommend separate – who'd want to grub weeds when you could be hunting?

Emerging issues

1. What do you see as the priority emerging issues, risks or opportunities?
Departments and managers will be focussed on the risks; hunters on the opportunities
2. Is increasing peri-urbanisation influencing pest management in rural areas?
Yes – every new block owner complicates pest control by loving the little critters until they are affected – then they are in turn restricted by the new neighbour
3. Is enough being done to ensure the welfare of animals in the delivery of pest management?

4. **Yes in hunting – not sure about poisoning,**
Should governments encourage the establishment of industries that commercially harvest pest animals such as goats, foxes and carp for economic gain?
Yes, as long as feral farms aren't created which then fail and result in releases
5. Is enough being done to manage the risk of new incursions from exotic pets?
More work is required to manage exotic pet owners
6. How can potential privacy concerns with the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) be managed to enable improved monitoring and data collection of invasive species?
Drones over public land shouldn't be a problem to law-abiding persons. Operators should be selected on the basis of integrity, and lack of humour and facebook page.

Adequate resourcing

1. Are the current resourcing and funding arrangements sufficient?
Unable to comment
2. Is the distribution of funding equitable and matched to pest animal priorities?
Unable to comment
3. Are there more cost-effective methods/approaches to managing pest animals?
Use more accredited volunteers who are prepared to cover their own costs
4. Are there workable alternative funding models from industry, government or community?
Unable to comment
5. What opportunities are there to work with the private sector to deliver programs, or secure funding?
Unable to comment
6. Is the current investment in research sufficient (e.g. amount of funding, time scale of funding)?
Unable to comment
7. How can available research dollars be used more effectively, better prioritised and coordinated and/or better leverage additional investment?
Unable to comment
8. Should new industry players (such as game hunting, wild fur and rangeland goat harvesting) have a role in offsetting pest animal control costs? Similarly, should those that generate pest animal management risks and/or benefit from pest animal management actions contribute to the costs of management?
Yes and Yes

Knowledge building

1. Are there any additional barriers to effective implementation of pest research outcomes?
Unable to comment

Comments on NRC State Review-L Welham 6

2. How can the dissemination of research results and the adoption of new controls and technologies be improved?
Unable to comment
3. What roles and responsibilities should research and development corporations have with respect to pests?
Carry out the work and be brave about publishing the results/ findings
4. Is there a need to develop accreditation programs for professional development?
Most professions recognise the necessity for continuing and broad education
5. How can information be made more readily available/accessible?
Unable to comment
6. Are the current surveillance activities likely to identify new pest animal incursions in a timely manner?
Unable to comment
7. Is information on the effectiveness of pest animal management programs collected? If not why not?
Unable to comment
8. If information is collected, is it used to adapt /change subsequent programs?
Unable to comment