

*The Northern Zone Hunting Club (Inc) - Submission to NSW Pest Animal Management Review- 2015.

As a Club involved in feral animal control, are in receipt of the NSW Natural Resources Commission request for submissions. We have read the above Issues Paper-noting that submissions are closing COB 30/11/2015. We apologise for this late submission, but our meetings are quarterly.

GENERAL:

The NZH Club is based in the Lismore/Ballina/Richmond River shires on the FNC of NSW. It has been in existence since 2002. We feel there are considerable public benefits from pest control via recreational hunting:- improving the native environment; economic- through participant spending in rural areas; promoting a healthy lifestyle; control of pest animals and also culturally. There is a desire from many in our community to hunt, clubs such as ours train and encourage members to do this ethically, legally and safely. This sets a standard for others in the firearm community to follow.

COMMENTS:

Training/qualification/rules/paperwork has multiplied greatly for hunting on State land recently - thus our members' trips to State Forests in our Region have also declined, particularly after many worth-while State Forests were closed for conservation hunting after the 2013 change of management. This has led to private land being the main venue for our more recent feral/pest recreational hunting activities. Generally we have seen a general slackening of interest over participation in State land feral/pest-hunting. We feel this is due to many of the local main State Forest hunting areas near population centres not being re-opened for conservation-hunting purposes. This scenario has happened in spite of our repeated requests to FC and DPI for these former areas to be considered for re-opening to conservation hunting.

Co-operation with other government land-managers is still non-existent, despite many requests made to them over the years to unlock their managed land to conservation hunting. Consequently we have given more assistance to private landowners over the last year - all at no cost to any landowner or manager. This has been very successful and has yielded good results as regards the total number of problem feral animals removed by our members. We cannot see why this could not be the case regarding other public land, including selected areas of national park estate.

It is sometimes hard to understand how such a low-cost and valuable volunteer resource for feral/pest animal control has been overlooked (and even belittled) for so long by key government land-managers. Historically the lack of willing co-ordination from public land managers, such as the LLS and NPWS is practically non-existent, except (we understand) from some recent far-western trials involving the SSSA and NPWS.

We feel clubs generally could be far better utilised by the community and government to assist in the current push to control feral animals, via a far more integrated and co-ordinated overall approach to the increasing feral/pest problem. [Perhaps individual rec-hunters could tirelessly seek-out the more wily individual feral residues left after main eradication schemes, to stop re-infection of previously cleared areas. Organised/directed/managed general hunting plans aiming to push groups of feral animals into GPS-defined areas by exerting hunting pressure, so there they can be more easily exterminated 'en masse'. These are but two innovative ideas coming from the members of our club].

As regards the fresh-water aquatic environment, we feel that the present legal prohibition on bow-hunting for feral fish such as carp should be re-examined. Such a selective method could be most useful in many circumstances to reduce the number of large exotic fish of breeding size that now proliferate in our water-courses and rivers to the detriment of bio-diversity and the overall fish/aquatic habitat.

It is relevant to note that all hunting clubs have a considerable bank of expertise in many methods of pest and feral animal control. Specialist pest/feral hunters are available for :- rabbit, pig, wild dog and exotic bird control - and more. Our available equipment owned by members includes:- modern sighting systems, approved cat and bird traps; IR, trail and thermal-camera surveillance - as well as considerable private ownership of other specialist equipment, GPS/electronics and of course a large investment in firearms & ammunition. These assets surely deserve to be more widely used in future, via our free pest eradication service to:- landowners, community, government and other land-managers.

However, some of the most suitable firearms for pest animal control are paradoxically the very ones denied by Government to our Club members via the categories imposed under the NFA 1996. [EG the recent 'Adler 101' saga].

Better co-ordination of all available resources, including trained volunteer recreational hunters must surely be part of the future if we are to check the increasing feral threat to our native biodiversity and rural industries.

On behalf of members of NZHC(Inc).....President- Raj Singh....Secy- Rob Andrews....Dated 29/11/15

