

Shoalhaven City Council Response to the State-wide review of New South Wales pest animal management

The New South Wales Natural Resources Commission has released an issue paper on the review of pest animal management in New South Wales. The purpose of the issues paper is to seek feedback on the ways in which pest animal management activities can be improved and barriers overcome. The issues paper included 48 questions regarding the functioning of pest animal management in New South Wales, to which community feedback was sought. The following table outlines the questions considered to be the most important for the Shoalhaven.

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Shoalhaven response</i>
Are roles and responsibilities between different levels of government clear?	Roles and responsibilities are not clear to members of the public, and sometimes not clear to government agency staff. Our experience is that most people believe that Council is responsible for rabbit and fox control. The confusion of roles is found in both urban areas as well as by farmers and rural land owners. Most people who contact Council requesting action have not heard of Local Land Services (LLS) or the Livestock Health and Pest Authority (the previous State agency responsible for pest management). The first step to deal with this confusion would be to ensure that all government staff who deal with members of public have a thorough understanding of the relevant roles and responsibilities, and are able to communicate this effectively.
What arrangements can be made for issues to be managed at the appropriate scale for efficiency and effectiveness?	The process of LLS issuing poison baits for feral pest control is overly bureaucratic and wasteful. Most people who bait do so regularly. They are required to have done training with LLS. Organisations like local government have relevant risk management processes in place. However the LLS treat every bait operation as if the person does not baited before, with a requirement of the forms and orders every time. There should be a recognition that regular baiting operations at multiple locations can be authorised as a group program, such as allowing one approval for a yearly program for the whole of the local government area. Such an operation would have a single approval process, with baits then easily available to implement the agreed programme.
What are the triggers for government intervention?	Council's triggers are risk management in public areas, threats to endangered species and complaints or requests for action by the public.
Are current education and awareness programs working?	There are minimal public awareness programs in regard to wild dogs, foxes or rabbits in the Shoalhaven. This is similar to the poor level of awareness of many rural landowners of their responsibilities in regard to a range of issues, such as weed, vegetation and water issues. State Government should consider resources and strategies to increase awareness.

Ordinary Meeting-24 November 2015 - Item 26 - Attachment C

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Do industry bodies need to be better engaged?	Industry bodies are largely unengaged in feral pest management in this area. Rural industry bodies and primary producers do not treat feral pest management as a significant issue. This is particularly the case for the smaller landowners who increasingly cover a larger proportion of the rural landscape and the do not engage with any industry bodies.
Should pest management be coordinated by species or by locality?	There are clear interconnections between pest species management at a local level; for example , the control of wild dogs, foxes, feral cats, rabbits, blackberries and lantana have significant synergies and overlapping actions and are better managed in a cooperative strategy. A second example concerns the impact of wild dogs on fire weed control. Landowners had commenced using sheep for fire weed control but had to discontinue these operations due to wild dog attacks on the sheep. However, the development of new control chemicals and strategies plays an important part.
Should pest animal and plant management be integrated?	As mentioned above, there are significant overlapping issues for many but not all pest plants and animals. Council has a concern that significantly altering these arrangements will simply create confusion among landowners and at the local level. Furthermore, Council would also be concerned if a regional approach resulted in many local issues receiving less attention.
What do you see as emerging opportunities?	Emerging opportunities such as the new fox and wild dog poison (PAPP), mechanical bait ejectors and new bio controls have all been very slow to be developed, tested, approved and are released. Some delays are inevitable as these are complex decision systems. These delays imposes extra costs on many other sectors including local government.
Is increasing Peri-urbanisation influencing pest management?	The peri-urban landscape represents a significant problem in pest management, with the competing demands for asset protection, bushland management, and pest and weed incursions. The peri urban landscape is one that offers plentiful food and harbour to pest animals, but also reduces the community's capacity to manage these pests. Most of the traditional pest management strategies are not appropriate or difficult to implement in this landscape. New techniques (such as PAPP) and changes in regulations (reduced distances for baiting) would be of assistance.
Is enough being done to ensure the welfare of animals?	Council considers that the current methods and strategies meet the welfare needs of pest animals.

Ordinary Meeting-24 November 2015 - Item 26 - Attachment C

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Should industries commercially harvesting pest animals be encouraged?	While this sounds laudable, a commercial harvesting industry requires a certain population of pests on an ongoing basis, which is at odds with pest reduction. The commission should note the lessons learnt from the Game Council operation. The Game Council objective for a commercial deer hunting industry required a healthy population of deer, most of whom subsequently lived on properties where hunting was not allowed where they damaged fences and vegetation, and resulted in illegal hunting operations. There are significant problems to be overcome if this approach were adopted.
Are current resourcing and funding arrangements sufficient?	Feral pest management is not achieving the objectives desired and resourcing must be one of the barriers. There is minimal Federal or State government funding for pest programmes, other than through State agency staffing. Local government is not in a position to significantly increase funding for feral pest operations. Private landowners seem to be investing only very small amounts of effort in pest control. At the same time, the regulations and procedures seem to be taking more of the available time, while knowledge, technology and management have not improved greatly.
Are there more cost effective approaches? Is current research sufficient?	Biological controls are the most likely approaches to achieve control across the landscape, in addition to new and safer chemical controls. From a local perspective, it appears that any advances occur only very slowly, and that probably insufficient resources are being applied for the research and development of pest management controls.
Who should contribute to the costs of management?	If resources for feral pest management needs to be increased, then users and beneficiaries need to contribute to the costs of pest management. Many urban and rural residential residents request services and benefit from the management of pest animals, particularly rabbits, foxes, feral cats and likely in future cane toads. However feral pest control has traditionally been seen as a rural issue and partly funded by primary producers. However, small rural holdings and residential owners do not contribute to feral pest management.
Is information on the effectiveness of pest management collected?	Council is not aware of any consistent recording or reporting methodologies or their effectiveness across the state.