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Wednesday, 9 December 2015

Natural Resources Commission

GPO Box 5341

Sydney NSW 2001

Submission; - State-wide review of pest animal management.

Issues Paper.

The view that land such as national parks and forests are a breeding ground for many pest species has been made even more obvious with the introduction of schedule 2 land, in that a parcel of land that is under orders to eradicate wild dogs (private) can be next door to a parcel of land where these same animals are a protected species with no scientific proof that these animals are indeed "dingos". This does nothing to warrant respect by private landholders towards government departments and managers of schedule 2 land.

The cost to individual farmers of \$7200 for wild dog issues is considerably low with this cost been significantly over run by me in years gone by where literally hundreds of sheep have been slaughtered by wild dogs. This cost would be in the tens of thousands of dollars.

Pest species need to be controlled in one of four ways;-

Control Level 1; - ERADICATION – the complete removal of a pest species.

Control Level 2; - CONTINUOUSLY SURPRESS AND DESTROY.

Control Level 3; - MINIMISE THE EFFECTS OF A PEST SPECIES ON ITS ENVIRONMENT.

Control Level 4; - TO MONITOR A PEST FOR IMPACTS ON ITS SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT AND NEW INCURSIONS.

Shared responsibility by all stakeholders is by far the most effective way to combat any pest. Time and again, rules are established but there is no legal ground (that is policed anyway) on which stakeholders can be held accountable, especially government agencies that make up the rules, like schedule 2 lands, where wild dogs are a protected species but not enough resources are supplied to contain these pests within these areas.

The Brindabella and Wee Jasper Valleys Wild Dog / Fox Control Plan (BWJP) was set up with all stakeholders having ownership and responsibility for the plan, it has been proven to be the most acceptable and effective form of control that is available and is the bench mark for many more plans since its inception, with it looking like surviving well into the future with all stakeholders committed to a further 5 years and beyond. With costs pegged against CPI.

The BWJP prides itself on having a very robust and transparent reporting and monitoring criteria, including financials, which is the envy of some other plans.

The BWJP has been set up with all stakeholders providing funding to ensure its' success, with landholders not only paying taxes which fund NPWS and DPI but also paying rates to the LLS and also contributing to an "in kind" form of funding which covers baiting. I myself spend well over \$2000.00 to complete an annual baiting in autumn.

After many years of successful control work, the BWJP is now finding it harder to deliver the outcomes that are required, mostly due to funding restraints by state government entities and now with schedule 2 lands in the BWJP area, there is a conflict of interest whether a wild dog is a pest or should be protected with no extra funding provided to contain this pest within the schedule 2 area. This also makes a mockery of having "consistent control strategies for effective pest animal management", which is "widely recognised" as the best practise for community involvement.

In the 1950s', 60s', 70s' and early 1980's the incidence of wild dog attack was intermittent, it has only been since then that the issue has become continuous. This may be because of an increase in the area of national park estate or the inter-breeding of dingos with feral dogs or a mix of the two. A true dingo only has one pup a year, now we have two litters of pups a year.

5 year plans should be a standard time for plans as this gives all stakeholders some continuity which relieves some of the emotion. But plans need to be robust enough to continue past the running dates of the plan if required. We are lucky that NPWS and state forests are very willing to do this too.

If a pest species is still causing major problems after a "peer recognised" style of plan is in place, but is still not working due to a lack of resources, or some other issue, there should be more government support, with grants and / or continuous funding, for this purpose.

All control efforts, especially across different tenures, need to have plans, which are adhered to and with as many stakeholders as possible and **ALL** neighbours informed of running times and the results of the control work done.

Compliance and enforcement of control orders is misleading, in that on private land a landholder can be prosecuted for not adhering to the law, although this has rarely happened, if at all, but on public lands there appears to be no enforceable criteria. There

needs to be specific obligations that are enforceable and the same for all tenures, with a governing body, most likely the Local Land Services (LLS) or similar, that has the actual power to enforce the law. With enforcement comes responsibility and there would need to be a compliance officer, who is respected and has the backing of all stakeholders. Local council should not be a compliance authority as they are one of the biggest offenders and are a cause of many outbreaks of new pest species, both plants and animals.

It is a view of private landholders that if government is to implement new rules, for example a new national park or ruling over a land title, then it should supply extra funding / compensation to limit the adverse effects that this ruling will have. This does not happen. Similarly there is growing concern that the NPWS is not providing enough funding as the wild dogs are mostly coming out of their land and onto private land.

Landholders both public and private are more likely to do pest control work if their neighbours are doing it. There should also be more enforcement available toward an entity if their neighbour is doing all it can in relation to pest control work. Too often, a land manager (private or public) states that if their neighbour (public or private) was to do some pest control work that it would be easier for them to do it too. This is the same for weed control.

Communication, data collection and reporting can always be improved, mostly between different levels of an organisation or different regions of the same organisation. We just had an issue where the LLS in another region was not passing on information to our region and as such wild dog control work was not done. There was also an issue when with the previous LHPA that all financial records were requested to be kept at a central office and these were not kept in a state that was accessible or assessable and this was not in the best interests of any stakeholders and it was extremely difficult to amend the issue. So I'm not sure that having a central repository would be of any benefit and may be a burden on plans. There have also been times when no feedback, after control work, is required. Whatever feedback is required it needs to be very simple and in as many forms as are required by all stakeholders (fax, phone, email etc).

Funding can't be all spent on research, there needs to be local knowledge used as well, with money not wasted on bureaucracy. This is a common problem where a lot of money is spent on administration but nothing is achieved "on ground". There could also be other avenues for funding. The release of funds from the "pest insect levy", calling it a "pest levy", would be more beneficial than the current arrangement, we had one incidence where locusts were present in our region (a very small incursion) and we have been paying the levy since with no further incursions. This would be seen as a better use of funds and an increase in this levy could also be mooted. Administration cost also keep increasing as the level of scrutiny increases, as plans become more accountable with less time spent "in the field" doing the work. A level of acceptance needs to be found here. A reduction in the size of LLS rateable land from 10Ha. to 2Ha. would be beneficial as these small holdings are some of the biggest

offenders in regard to pest species control and they benefit from the control work been done by others. It would be seen as a spreading of the costs.

Control plans need to be made up at a local level with local people that people know and trust, these would be more effective than a plan made up by someone else in a different area and told that this is the way it will be done. There would be no ownership or respect for the plan. To do a species control plan on wild dogs would be too cost restrictive, but a reduction in numbers in their breeding habitat is required and would be an achievable goal. Keeping up interest in a plan that is working is harder than keeping up interest in a plan that is not, we generally have no problem keeping up interest in the BWJP as there is always an issue somewhere in the plan area.

Control plans need to reflect the greatest possible benefit for the community (triple bottom line), with an emphasis on biosecurity, where it would cost more to eradicate low numbers of pests but the reward would be more significant.

Local knowledge is not used as much as it could be. We have had issues with pig baiting been done when there is an abundance of food for pigs and a poor result is achieved, but when we have had little food for pigs (an ideal time to bait) we have had little or no support from NPWS because it is not classed as the right time of year. There is some times a real lack of intuition. Or that we have had pig issues on our land and are doing a pig baiting program and a request to the adjoining national park to do the same is replied with "that they feel that there is insufficient numbers to warrant a control effort". This is extremely poor.

In our region wild dogs are by far the most problematic pest with foxes and pigs also a major issue and deer is now an emerging problem.

Biosecurity and the triple bottom line should be the major criteria for pest control work to proceed and it should start before a pest gets established. Once the pest is established it is a lot harder to control, so priority should be given to new or emerging pest species or to the control of a species to stop it from spreading or building up in numbers. Deer are a carrier for OJD.

Accountability to the public to be seen to be doing the right thing is a must, with accountability to adjoining and close proximity neighbours also required. This is lacking.

In the case of schedule 2 lands. If the public want it, they should pay for it and the issues that come with that policy.

Incentives don't seem to work for the majority of people. If a person is going to do control work, they will. But if a person is against doing it or has another issue, then there should be some sort of compliance rules.

Templates can be used for the setting up of plans and for monitoring their success, but if too much information is required then people will lose interest. But in saying that if plans are

consistent in set up and monitoring then it is easier to compare and collate information for dissemination.

Pigs, dogs, deer and foxes are highly mobile pest species and can travel huge distances in a short time and I do feel that weed control work should go hand in hand with these pests control work in the areas where these pests are usually found together to limit the spread of the weeds that they feed on or use for shelter.

If an exotic disease gets into Australia, like Foot and Mouth disease, and it gets into the wild population of pigs or deer it will never be contained. Similarly we have an issue in our region with sheep measles which is hard to control because of our population of wild dogs and foxes.

The issue of exotic pets is a complex one, but any of these pets that may cause an issue if allowed to stray or become feral should be desexed at the very least, my personal preference is to not allow them to be used as pets in Australia. We already have too many other plants and animals that were brought into Australia for companion or beauty and they have now taken over, foxes, wild dogs, rabbits, carp, Pattersons curse are just a few.

With a more mobile population around the world there is a significant chance that more plants and animals which can cause a breakdown of the current environment will travel and end up in Australia, and I don't think that Australia is adequately prepared for this outcome, look at the horse flu outbreak, it should have never happened and could have been a lot worse.

With the world becoming more populated and urban sprawl becoming the norm, human waste and habitat have become the ideal breeding ground for so many pest species. This has also become a major source of emerging pests.

With peri-urbanisation we also have more people who have a small block and due to their dog and cat they will not join group baiting programs for foxes or do not live on the block so are oblivious or ignorant to the problem. Education and enforcement is required here.

Government should not encourage the establishment of industries that commercially harvest pest species. The main reason is that for a pest to be commercially viable the pest species, usually, has to be in plague proportions.

Drones and other surveillance methods will have their place in pest control and the issue of privacy will be met with the use of education and information being provided to people in the surveillance area. As long as I knew that a drone or other type of surveillance was going to be used on a certain day at a certain time in a certain place I would not be concerned.

Industry players such as game hunters have a very limited role especially where a plan is already in place. Such hunting would leave carcasses in the field and then a pest may not take bait. Or it would deter pests from coming to traps or human smell after hunters missing

their target or wounded animals left in the field. Those that create a pest problem should have a bigger cost imposed on them for pest management. But, for instance, a sheep farmer that benefits from dog control work is and has already paid enough.

As new technologies become available it is important that all stakeholders are made aware of them and to see whether they would be interested in using them, we are very lucky in the BWJP that we have people who are looking for new products and who are also keen to put them into use as a trial. With new technologies available it is important that they are made available to the public with no ownership as such, sort after by the R & D corporations, if the handover of ownership is not forthcoming then it should be purchased by the government for the use by the public for the greater good.

Accreditation programs are alright but sometimes there is too much onus on “having a ticket”, when the skills required are simple, or the task is already been performed to a high degree by the people concerned.

Knowing what information and technology is actually “out there” is probably the biggest issue faced by stakeholders, once known it is relatively easy to disseminate, with current avenues.

The current surveillance activities for pest detection are not effective or they are not being used properly. We have a growing issue with deer in our area and there is no plan to control them at this stage that I am aware of.

For the BWJP information is collected on its effectiveness to a high standard but for other control programs there seems to be little or no collection, our annual group baiting is one. So this could be better.

The information collected from the BWJP is used to update the plan, we would call our plan living. We also have a high use of new resources. Like the M44 (CPE).

One of the biggest issues that the BWJP has faced to date has been changes in government which then want to find cost savings. This in turn leads to department reshuffle and different policy, different policy leads to different departments with different views. When the RLPB changed to the LHPA and then to the LLS, there have been different outcomes desired from all these entities. We have been lucky so far that our plan has survived these tests. Also government in an effort to secure votes in parliament has made partnerships with independents or other parties and this has caused issues. The proposed allowance of recreational hunters into national parks and state forests through the Game Council was a very poor choice and a very real concern to us and our plan. Recreational hunters have their place but in the case of pest control to a plan these hunters need to be “professional”.

When the BWJP was set up we looked as to whether other pest species could be controlled at the same time. It was decided that dogs and foxes were the main pest species to be controlled, with opportunistic hunting of pigs and cats, due to time and money constraints.

When our last Pest Animal Controller (PAC) retired (for personal reasons) the time taken to employ a new PAC was nearly three months, in this time we had a huge increase in wild dog activity which took over a year to amend. We all knew of the looming retirement, including the LHPA (as it was then called), but nothing could be done about it due to government policy until the PAC actually retired.

There should also be more emphasis on pest control after an exceptional circumstance, like drought or fire when pest species are generally lower, both plants as well as animals.

Kangaroos should also be considered a pest. Their numbers are consistently growing and are in numbers that are many times the number that were in Australia in 1770. They are also in areas that they were not in 20 years ago and it seems that every peri-urban block is a residence for a mob of kangaroos.

Yours sincerely

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