

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Red Imported Fire Ants in Australia

I wish to draw the committee's attention to the following matters:

- An article from the Fassifern Guardian regarding unsatisfactory interaction of Biosecurity Queensland people with landholders
- Personal observation of a recheck for fire ants which indicates an administrative system flaw
- Meeting with organic growers in Gatton Queensland in February 2019 - local audience treated with disdain.

Fassifern Guardian article 14 September 2022 - "Boonah meeting fires up over ant issue"
<https://www.fassifernguardian.com/scenic-rim/boonah-meeting-fires-up-over-ant-issue>

Gatton meeting with organic growers 5 February 2019

The main spokesman for Biosecurity Queensland antagonised a number of the attendees who were mostly organic growers concerned about having their 'certified organic accreditation' put at risk by broad application of fireant bait. The spokesman tried to avoid questions from the floor and this approach was challenged by attendees. The approach created a hostile mood in the meeting.

Personal observations

Next door to my property, fire ants were found and treated several years ago on a 60 hectare farm. The Biosecurity Queensland field team returned to the property after a gap of a couple of years to recheck for fireants. The field team started checking around the house, hay shed, machinery shed and cattle yards. The owner's son intervened and advised the field team that the location of the previous infestation was in a cultivation several hundred metres from where they were looking. The field team went to the cultivation. They found 29 nests in the cultivation. They found none around the buildings and other infrastructure. The fact that they went about conducting a re-check for fire ants without knowledge of the previous fireant infestation location indicates that there is a system flaw.

Queensland Audit Office report "Managing Invasive Species" dated 4 July 2023

Chapter 5 refers to Eradicating fire ants and I suggest that the committee considers this audit report in its deliberations.
<https://www.qao.qld.gov.au/reports-resources/reports-parliament/managing-invasive-species>

Adherence to the provisions of the Queensland Biosecurity Act 2014

There are four biosecurity considerations named at Section 5 of the Act namely 'human health, social amenity, the economy and the environment'. I have formed the impression that there are many instances where the aspect of 'social amenity' (social pleasantness or agreeable in a situation) was not present between the community and Biosecurity Queensland fireant people.

Section 12 of the Act requires it "to be administered, as far as practicable, in consultation with, and having regard to the views and interests" of.....the community generally. It is my observation that in many instances the views and interests of the community have not been shown due regard.

Thanks for the opportunity to make a submission.