

SUBMISSION NO. 78

Secretary: *[Signature]*
RECEIVED
29 JUN 2004
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES
AND FORESTRY

COBAR RURAL LANDS PROTECTION BOARD.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS TO INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE OF PEST ANIMALS.

FOR HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY.

25 June 2004.

GENERAL

The Cobar RLPB area is **3,814,000** hectares.

The Cobar Board is rated to carry **704,708 d.s.c.**

The Cobar Board agricultural industries consist of mainly sheep, cattle and goat production with areas of cereal grain cropping.

The Cobar Board consists of **8 Directors**, **1 Administrative Officer** and **1 Ranger**.

- 1. TO IDENTIFY SIGNIFICANT PEST ANIMAL ISSUES AND CONSIDER HOW EXISTING AUSTRALIAN AND STATE GOVERNMENT PROCESSES CAN BE BETTER LINKED FOR MORE COORDINATION MANAGEMENT OF THESE ISSUES ACROSS STATE BOUNDARIES.**

FERAL PIGS,

- Decrease livestock breeding percentages due to predation on newly born livestock.
- « Destroy viable vegetation and cereal crops.
- Potential **major** disease carriers in the event of an **Exotic Disease** outbreak (**c.g. Foot and Mouth Disease**) posing a threat to **the** livestock industry within the Cobar RLPB district and in Australia. The distribution of **feral pigs** would make **quarantining** and eradication extremely difficult,
- Foul surface water used by livestock.
- Reduce crop yields by eating crops and digging up cropped ground.
- « **Damage fences.**

FOXES.

- Decrease livestock breeding percentages **duc** to predation on newly born livestock.
- « Potential major disease carriers in the event of an Exotic Disease outbreak (**c.g. Rabies**), and potential **disease carriers** of diseases such as **Mange and Hydatids**.
- » Do not have "Pest Animal" status in **N.S.W.** **Currently** foxes have "Nuisance Animal" status, therefore there is no legal obligation for landholders to **control** fox numbers.

WILD DOGS.

- Destruction / stress of livestock.
- Potential carriers of **disease** (**c.g. Hydatids, Rabies**),

RABBITS.

- Compete with livestock for food (**9 rabbits equals 1 d.s.e.**).
- « Reduce crop yields by eating crops.
- Affect the structure and stability of soil, thus **diminishing** the viable area for vegetation or farming and, to a lesser extent, destabilising farm buildings.

FERAL GOATS.

- * Compete with feed and water for livestock.
- * **Potential** major disease carriers in the event of an Exotic Disease outbreak (e.g. Foot and **Mouth Disease**). The **distribution** of feral goats would **make** quarantining and eradication **difficult**.
- Damage fences.
- Harvesting of goats is also a business and is a means of farmers **supplementing** income. The lucrative feral goat market is a good incentive for livestock producers to reduce feral goat numbers. **Graziers** are also running **successful** goat enterprises **in** the Western Division.

FERAL CATS.

- * Decrease livestock breeding percentages due to **predation** on newly born livestock (e.g. lambs and kids).
- * Cany **discases** such as **Toxoplasmosis** and **Sarcosporidiosis**. These diseases **can** be transmitted to **domestic** livestock, native animals and humans.
- Carry exotic disease such as Rabies.
- The State Council of the Rural Lands Protection Boards Pest Animal & Insect Control Committee (**PAICC**) carried out a review as to whether **feral** cats should be **declared** a pest animal under the RLP Act, In brief, the PAICC was not, in support of feral cats being declared pest animals at this point in time because;
 - a) There **is** no effective broad scale control tool for feral cats.
 - b) There is currently no control method that is cat specific.
 - c) The feral cat does not present a great impact on **agriculture**, though it is **linked** to impacting on native fauna,
 - d) There is legislation in **N.S.W.** that already allows landholders to control feral cats.

CANE TOAPS.

- » Now in large numbers in Carnarvon Gorge, **Queensland**, **which** is the headwaters of the Murray Darling Basin River System. It **would** be fair to assume that there is a possibility of Cane Toads adapting and moving south along the Murray Darling River System.

NATIVE SPECIES.

- **Increased** populations of native species can also be pests. Native species **population** explosions from favourable **seasonal** conditions can cause serious **financial** losses to livestock producers, from **feed** and water **competition**, damage to fences **and** predation. Kangaroos, wedge tailed eagles and emus (but not limited to) have been reported causing major problems with **landholders**.

Issues identified at the June 2004 Annual State Conference of RLPB's PAJ Committee forum included;

- * A much broader perspective on pest animal control needs to be developed as landholders well know that pest animal populations do not stop at **district**, state or territory **borders**.

- A key Issue raised was **the need** to further **lobby** the Federal Government for a national strategy on pest animal control and management, whilst at the same time coordinating more state-wide control programmes to increase the impact of overall management strategies was identified as a crucial activity (e.g. there was a strong **call** for increased coordinated state wide baiting programmes for wild dogs and **foxes**.)
2. TO CONSIDER THE APPROACHES TO PEST ANIMAL ISSUES ACROSS ALL RELEVANT JURISDICTIONS,
- « Prevention of new Pest Animals being established is largely dependant upon vigilance of landholders and reporting to **RLPB** field officers and aggressive eradication action,
 - * Detection and reporting systems for **new and** established pest animals should be nationally **uniform** and consistent.
 - Eradication of newly established pest animal species should be a priority, where possible, to **prevent further** spread of population.
 - * It is the opinion of **Cobar RLPB** that there is no such thing as **total eradication** of established Pest Animals within the Board's district, as the costs and **time associated** with total eradication would be prohibitive. There have only been 2 -3 cases in the world where eradication has been successful --- this has been at a huge cost.
3. CONSIDER THE ADEQUACY OF STATE GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE ON PEST ANIMAL CONTROL IN THE CONTEXT OF OTHER CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO NATIONAL PARKS.
- **National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)** has worked in conjunction with adjoining Cobar RLPB ratepayers with pest animal control **with** issuing free baits to these ratepayers whenever NPWS conducts baiting programmes. Whenever possible Cobar RLPB will jointly work with NPWS with **pest** animal control.
 - * NPWS has **acquired** large tracts of **land**, and concerns have **been** raised that **matching** budgets have not **been** forthcoming for adequate pest **animal control** within these Parks. **It is felt** that adequate budgets should be provided and managed more efficiently for these Parks. Government and Community have a duty of care to manage and control pest animals.
 - « Cobar RLPB stresses the importance of Federal and State **support** for ongoing funding for cooperative control of feral pigs, foxes and rabbits. Cobar RLPB thanks both levels of Government for their recent funding initiatives.
 - Federal funding for rabbit ripping has resulted in **successful** control over areas where warrens have been destroyed.
 - * State funding for feral pig and fox control has been instrumental in many land holders participating in group control of these pest animals.
- 9 The N.S.W. Government drought initiatives on feral pig and fox control in the **Western Division (\$1m)** was a positive **step** which resulted in a successful response from landholders.

- * West 2000 / 2000 Plus **assisting** with management enhancement has also brought positive **results**. In the south west portion of the Board, rabbit ripping programmes have proved successful.
4. **CONSIDER THE SCOPE FOR INDUSTRY GROUPS AND R&D CORPORATIONS TO IMPROVE THEIR RESPONSE TO LANDHOLDER CONCERNS ABOUT PEST ANIMALS.**
- » Lobby **industry** groups and R&D Corporations to investigate additional methods of control (**e.g. biological**).
 - * Government, Industry and Community have a duty of care to **manage** and maintain pest animals. Pest animal control should be an **all** of Government, Industry and Community approach,
 - » Cobar RLPB recommends that a Research Officer be funded to consult with Community Groups on pest **animals**.
5. **CONSIDER WAYS TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING OF AND INVOLVEMENT IN PEST ANIMALS AND THEIR MANAGEMENT.**
- * Pest Animals are not only agricultural **problems**. They also **become environmental**, health and rural / urban community problems. **It** is in the best **interest** of the wider community to control Pest Animals.
 - Pest Animal Management Control is the core business of the self funded 48 RLPB's in NSW. Cobar RLPB is actively assisting ratepayers with this service and also working in partnership with ratepayers and **NPWS** in baiting **programmes**. Ongoing Government **funding** can assist the Boards in **promotion**, education and service to ratepayers for pest animal **control**.
 - Cobar RLPB recommends that a National Programme be **developcd** for Pest **Animal** Management Control and Community Education.

Issues identified at the June 2004 Annual Slate Conference of RLPB 's PAI Committee forum included:

- * The education of both urban and rural people to increase the understanding of the need to control pest animals for environmental and **agricultural** impacts. Implications associated with disease outbreak reinforcing the need for disease control was also cited as an important step for **better** community **understanding** and participation in pest animal control.

Brindabella and Wee Jasper Valleys - cooperative wild dog and fox control programme 2002 - 2005.

- This plan is a good example of **Community**, RLPB's and Government working in **partnership** together for cooperative solution, and outlines an innovative approach to wild dog and fox management across all land tenures at the northern extent of the Australian Alps, and could be adopted to other regions.

FEDERAL/ STATE GOVERNMENT PEST ANIMAL CONTROL FUNDING.
The Cobar RLPB would take **the** opportunity of again thanking the **Federal** and **State Governments** for their respective recent **pest** animal **control** funding. The

Federal Govt. for **its** funding for rabbit ripping, which was used very effectively, and the State Govt. for its recent drought funding initiatives related to fox and feral pig control opportunities. Cobar **RLPB** and ratepayers greatly appreciated the funding,

Cobar **RLPB** **would** like to stress how important it is for the Federal and State Governments to **continue** their support for ongoing funding for cooperative pest animal control and provide adequate funding for Research and **Development** in controlling **numbers** of pest animals.