



Wangaratta Branch – 34 Taylor St. Wangaratta. 3677
Ph & Fx 0357 217890, 0429403268.

The Secretary,
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Committee.
House of Representatives.
Parliament House.
CANBERRA. ACT. 2600.

12th May 2004

Re: Inquiry into Impact of Pest Animals on Agriculture.

The Wangaratta Branch of the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) would like to take the opportunity to forward points of interest and relevance regarding the impact of pest animals on agriculture.

The points raised will be relevant to particularly the North East of Victoria involving open plains areas and valleys, as well as many areas bordering Crown Land forests.

On behalf of the members of the Wangaratta VFF we are appreciative of this opportunity to offer comment and would be willing to respond to this submission given the opportunity in the future.

Yours Sincerely

Chris Gibson

Chris Gibson
Secretary Wangaratta VFF.
Ph (0429)403268

THE IMPACT OF PEST ANIMALS ON AGRICULTURE

Pest animals are considered a major problem in the North East of Victoria. Many farming properties are located within reasonable proximity to the forested crown land areas of North East Victoria and are suffering given the ongoing problems of pest animals.

Pest animals within the region can be divided into two groups.

- 1) The traditional introduced types, Rabbits, Foxes, Wild dogs.
- 2) Native species, Kangaroos, Wombats, Cockatoos.

The result from an abundance of any of the above unfortunately results in economic losses for primary producers of the region. Losses can result from livestock damage or death, or simply damage to fences and or loss of pasture and grazing ability.

Many farmers of the region are involved in programs such as poisoning and treating rabbits through Landcare groups, as well as baiting of foxes. These programs are considered very successful when implementation occurs, however given the nature of landholders in the region (i.e. lifestyle landholders) uptake of these programs can be limited given stringent protocols put in place.

The use of 10-80 poison is considered an effective method of pest control. If the regularity process was given to Landcare groups for administration a further uptake and usage would no doubt occur. The continued protocols of safety and recording could still be satisfied, only allowing an easier point of access for landholders that in the past have not bothered with such a program, hence the ongoing problem with such pest animals. Further assistance and advice could be provided by the DPI in strategy and group co-ordination regarding baiting and control measures.

Wild dogs are becoming a particular problem in areas bordering the bushland. Whilst wild dogs committees have been in place endeavoring to co-ordinate control measures some frustration with full recognition and funding has become apparent by landholders in these areas. Further control measures of aerial baiting need to be implemented in order to gain some control of increasing numbers.

Ongoing research needs to be continued to develop alternative methods of control and or eradication. For example; development of viral infection specific to foxes (not unlike the successful impact mixamistosis had upon the rabbits of the past) may be achievable.

The impact of some of our native species needs to be further recognized as pest animals, particularly in excessive numbers. Kangaroos, Cockatoos and even Wombats have devastating effects on crops, fences and pasture land when numbers reach high levels.

The disappointing fact involving native animal culls is the wastage of the harvested resource. Many markets could evolve from use of the carcasses of Kangaroos in cuisine restaurant or pet food industry as well as the potential for the exporting of cockatoos. We believe for the effective control of these native pest animals the use the product needs to be utilized. Control of the native animal numbers can still be manipulated by licensing the operators of the eradication process and or methods

SUMMARY

- Pest animals have a large impact on the economic well being of farmers.
- Whilst current eradication programs of some pests are satisfactory, the control methods for common pest needs dedicated co-ordination and further availability to all effected land holders
- Wild dogs need to recognized as a major pest problem and further funding to provide aerial baiting and continued professional hunting of the dogs needs to be implemented.
- Research into alternative methods of control ie. biological, viral must be continued and enhanced.
- Some native animals need to be recognized as pests.
- Harvested product from culling operation should be utilized as marketable product not wasted.

Signed

Chris Gibson

On behalf of the Wangaratta Branch of the Victorian Farmers Federation