



Taking control of pest animals

A national approach is the key to dealing with the pest animal problem for Australian agriculture. This is a key recommendation of the House of Representatives Agriculture Committee, which today released its report, ***Taking Control: a national approach to pest animals***.

The committee Chair, Mr Alby Schultz, said, "Pest animals are a huge problem for Australian farmers. Wild dogs are decimating the sheep industry. The number of feral pigs roaming the country is in the order of 23 million, which would create a nightmare if foot-and-mouth disease broke out here. Pest animals cost the economy more than \$700 million each year."

The first recommendation of the report is for the establishment of a National Pest Animals and Weeds Committee, to include representatives from all state and territory governments as well as the federal government. The proposed body would be an amalgamation of the current Vertebrate Pests Committee and Australian Weeds Committee.

"Having a consistent approach to this problem across Australia is the key to solving the pest animal problem," Mr Schultz said. "When you have states and territories all doing their own thing, that makes it very difficult to control pest animals such as dogs, foxes, pigs, rabbits, goats, deer, donkeys, cane toads and camels, which are spread widely across the country."

"The proposed National Pest Animals and Weeds Committee will play a role in coordinating approaches across jurisdictions. Although the inquiry dealt with pest animals, not weeds, the committee felt it was appropriate that the same body deal with both issues. That is in keeping with the national biosecurity strategy that is currently being developed to improve Australia's response to pest animals and weeds."

The committee has also recommended the establishment of a National Pest Animals Advisory Committee, to include representatives from local and community groups, agricultural and pastoral industries and animal welfare organisations. The Advisory Committee would provide advice to the proposed National Committee on allocation of funding.

The report contains 47 recommendations. Some of the principal recommendations are that:

- quarantine measures be improved to reduce the possibility of pest species entering Australia;
- all governments substantially increase funding for control and eradication of pest animals;
- the federal government and state and territory governments create a special fund for the employment of doggers and pest animal controllers;
- the federal government encourage states and territories to ensure the continued availability of 1080 poison to landholders and reconsider its own commitment to phase out 1080 in Tasmania;
- state and territory governments be encouraged to provide adequate funds for managing pest animals on their government-owned land;
- the proposed National Committee encourage the commercial use of pest animals for harvesting and hunting; and
- the new Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre be given responsibility for coordinating pest animal research across the country.

“The committee has recommended increased funding by all governments for pest animal control and eradication,” Mr Schultz said. “In particular, the committee has been very concerned throughout this inquiry that there is simply not enough being done to deal with pest animals on government land, especially national parks.

“As an example, we are recommending that the federal government encourage state and territory governments to commit adequate funds for controlling pest animals on government land. We are also recommending that the federal government make environment funding to states and territories conditional on them achieving agreed targets for pest animal control.

“Pest animals have a serious impact on agriculture and the environment and it is time that concerted action was taken at all levels to address this issue.”

Members of the House of Representatives Agriculture Committee will hold a media conference at 12.50pm today (28 November) in committee room 1R4, Parliament House, Canberra.

For media comment please contact the office of committee chair, **Alby Schultz**, on **(02) 6277 4386** or mobile **0428 693 553** or email Alby.Schultz.MP@aph.gov.au.

For more detail on the inquiry and copies of the report, please contact:

The House Agriculture Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4500 or access the full report by visiting the inquiry website at:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/primind/pestanimals/index.htm>

Members of the House of Representatives Agriculture Committee are: Chair - **Alby Schultz** (Hume, NSW), Deputy Chair - **Dick Adams** (Lyons, Tas), **Martin Ferguson** (Batman, Vic), **Michael Ferguson** (Bass, Tas), **John Forrest** (Mallee, Vic), **Peter Lindsay** (Herbert, Qld), **Gavan O'Connor** (Corio, Vic), **Patrick Secker** (Barker, SA), **Wilson Tuckey** (O'Connor, WA) and **Tony Windsor** (New England, NSW).