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House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Parliament house
Canberra ACT 2600

SUBMISSION.....NO. 15

INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE OF PEST ANIMALS

The Cooma Rural Lands Protection Board district covers an area of approximately 1,296,000 hectares from the Australian Capital Territory border to the Victorian border. The Board has approximately 2500 ratepayers (who each have over 10 hectares of land). The terrain varies from steep, timbered high rainfall escarpment to low rainfall treeless plains. The main rural enterprises are grazing beef cattle and Merino sheep.

1. To identify nationally significant pest animal issues and consider how existing Australian and State government processes can be better linked for more coordinated management of these issues across State boundaries.

Establish a national list of pest species that do not recognize man made boundaries: ie wild dogs, rabbits, feral pigs, foxes, feral cats, feral deer, feral goats, wild horses.

Establish a national list of native animals that impact on the effectiveness of control programs: Common Wombat, Eastern Grey Kangaroo, Red Wallaby, Bushtail Possum, threatened Quoll.

There needs to be wide spread recognition and acceptance that the reason these animals remain as pests is that they do not recognise man imposed boundaries and jurisdictions. The pests must be controlled on a broad scale, nil tenure approach. All private landholders and government agencies must work together.

Secretary <i>Bob Vasek</i>
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2. To consider **the approaches to pest animal issues across all relevant jurisdictions**, including;

prevention of new pest animals becoming established;

- The current data being collected by all the various agencies needs to be collated to:
 - identify population existence and spread
 - identify development of monitoring dataWhen a potential pest is identified governments and agencies need to address all issues that could possibly relate to that pest animal. An example of the lack of planning is the problem that currently exists with deer and the restrictions on control methods,
- Existing control programs need to be recognized and developed.
- Education programs to promote awareness that any animal species released into the wrong habitat has the potential to become a pest animal in that environment.

detection and reporting systems for new and established pest animals;

- AH states have an agency eg. NSW Agriculture, in place, that commit resources to monitoring and controlling or enforcing control of pest animals.
 - » *All agencies require compatible databases and recording systems for all known pests*
- Better utilisation of resources through a national organisation is required so duplication does not occur and coordination between all agencies is guaranteed.
- It should be mandatory to report the presence of large home range declared pests ie. wild dogs and feral pigs.

eradication of infestations (particularly newly established species or 'sleeper' populations of species which are considered to be high risk) where feasible and appropriate;

- « Eradication of a species is mostly unachievable unless an effective program is instigated when the species is first detected. The natural terrain in most parts of Australia works against eradication.
- Controlling or minimising a population of pest species is feasible

reduction of the impact of established pest animal populations

- Successful control is dependent on the cooperation between landholders and/or agencies so the pest animal control program is on a broad scale.
 - « Sufficient resources must be made available for coordination and implementation of control programs. After continued poor seasons and low commodity prices, genuine rural landholders do not have the resources to undertake extensive programs.

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**

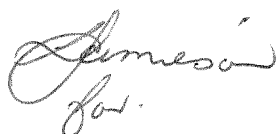
- Present expenditure is adequate. The problems occur due to inefficiency caused by lack of skill and experience, for the relevant pests, in various levels of management. In most instances field staff understand what is required, but are hindered by bureaucracy.
- Programs must be structured to control populations of pest species when identified across all land tenure at a level that addresses the scope of the problem and their habitat.
- There is an im-balance in conservation objectives to other native species particularly with the confusion between wild dogs and Dingoes.
- » Reference to National Parks management must be addressed, alongside other crown land. Funding to National Parks appears to be better than to other crown land managers.

4. Consider the **scope for industry groups and R & D Corporations to improve their response to landholder concerns about pest animals**

- « Pest species are a national problem.....
- The spread of exotic disease by pest species is a real threat to industry.
- The new National Livestock Identification Scheme can be used to determine the extent and spread of existing diseases in the populations of wild dogs, foxes and feral pigs. Some of these diseases are already impacting on rural communities.
- « R&D should be focussed on increasing production from existing assets
- R&D on pest control needs to improve current methods
- R&D on new methods should be focussed on alternates that landholders/land managers will be able to afford
- The above groups are not best utilised if they are directed to a problem that is beyond their scope

5. Consider ways to **promote community understanding of and involvement in pest animals and their management**

- An education program through the media that targets the damage caused to Australia's fragile environment by the various pest animals.
- National recognition of pest species and the need for control programs will provide a firm basis to develop and promote educational programs that target all levels of all communities at a national level
- » Different levels of government that enact their individual laws on a man made boundary that pest species cross creates confusion, does not control pest species, wastes resources and destroys community understanding.
- Vocal emotive groups must be educated and challenged to be aware of the impact that prioritising one species is destructive to any environment



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For and on behalf of the Cooma RLPB