

(04417)

29 June 2004

Mrs Kay Elson MP
Chair
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Inquiry into the Impacts on Agriculture of Pest Animals
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mrs Elson,

I write to you regarding the Inquiry into the Impacts on Agriculture of Pest Animals. I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry for the opportunity to provide a submission in relation to the inquiry. I would also like to thank Mr Bill Pender who provided State Council with an extension of time to submit this document. I hope that the comments offered will assist in providing the committee with clear-cut recommendations to further enhance pest animal control and management across Australia.

In 2001, the General Purpose Standing Committee Number 5 of the Legislative Council for the NSW State Government, conducted a Feral Animal Inquiry that mirror some of the Term of Reference of the current federal inquiry. State Council has attached to this submission at Appendix A, the Executive Summary and the 24 recommendations handed down by the state review committee for your information. Of importance to note is that the Standing Committee identified that feral animals pose a serious enough threat in NSW to agriculture (and the environment) and that this justified an increased funding boost from government.

State Council will provide a brief background into the history of pest and feral animals in Australia, then outline the Rural Lands Protection Board (Board) system in NSW and the operation of the Rural Lands Protection Act 1998 (RLP Act 1998) in relation to pest animal control. In relation to the terms of reference for the inquiry, State Council will comment under each terms of reference.

At the outset it is desirable to clarify a few points on the terminology relating to pest animals. The Macquarie Dictionary includes in the definition of "pest": *1. A noxious, destructive, or troublesome thing or person; nuisance 2. A deadly epidemic disease; a pestilence 3. A disease produced by the plague bacillus 4. An organism harmful to agriculture.*

Under the Rural Lands Protection Act 1998, "pest" is defined as: *any member of the animal kingdom declared by a pest control order to be a pest.*

For the purposes of this submission the terms pest animals, feral animals and wild animals are interchangeable, unless specifically indicated otherwise in the text. Also, a reference to a pest animal may or may not refer to a species which has been declared a “pest” under the RLP Act 1998.

Pest animals are a serious problem in NSW, and Australia in general, and have been for many decades. Much of this problem has been created by the importation of non-indigenous animal species, and the subsequent release or escape of these animals into the wild. This in turn facilitated a progressive increase in the populations of the various species concerned, which today cause widespread devastation and high on-going management and control costs. These costs are not only financial, but are also environmental and social. For example, predation by certain pest animals has no doubt contributed to the reduction in populations of various native species of fauna, or has placed stress and anxiety on a landholder whose flock have been mauled.

Some of the significant historical events associated with feral animals are outlined below –

- The spread of rabbits in Australia from an area near Geelong in Victoria since 1859 is well documented. There is much less information available on the initial spread of the other non-indigenous pest animals, feral pigs and wild dogs (other than dingoes). However, it can be surmised that populations of these species became established in the wild as far back as the latter years of the 18th century. The spread of all the declared pest species has progressed to a point where they are virtually present to a greater or lesser extent throughout NSW.
- In the late 1880s the rabbit population in NSW was growing at an alarming rate. The first legislation in NSW aimed at addressing a feral animal problem was the Pastures and Stock Protection Act 1880. That Act had a two-pronged emphasis – to attempt to eradicate scab (a type of mange) in sheep, and the control of noxious animals, which were defined as “marsupials, native dogs (dingoes) and rabbits at large”. This new concept at the time of “noxious animals” nominated species that were arguably a more serious pest, and persons were compelled to control populations of such species on their land.
- In 1883 a Rabbit Nuisance Act was passed, and this enabled the provisions of the Pastures and Stock Protection Act pertaining to rabbits to be repealed. The Rabbit Nuisance Act provided for the appointment of inspectors with power to enter on both private and Crown lands, and to serve notices on owners of private land to destroy rabbits.
- Rabbit infestations in the Colony were a major cause for concern in the late 19th century. In 1888 the NSW government established a Royal Commission into the methodology of rabbit control. As part of that inquiry, a reward of £25,000 (a very large amount in those days) was offered to any person who could demonstrate “... any process not previously known in the Colony for the effectual extermination of rabbits...”. The final report of the Royal Commission indicated that no new worthwhile methodology was submitted. No doubt the control of rabbits (and other pest animals) continued to be effected by shooting, trapping and the unregulated use of various poisons.
- In 1902 various related Acts (including those with provisions pertaining to pest control) were consolidated into the Pastures Protection Act. This Act created Pastures Protection Districts and Pastures Protection Boards. As a consequence of amendments through the years, there was further consolidation in 1912 and 1934.
- The Pastures Protection Act 1934 operated until 1990. Under that Act noxious animals included rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), wild dogs (including dingoes) (*Canis familiaris*), feral pigs (*Sus scrofa*) and, until circa 1955, foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*). Under that Act the Boards were responsible for, *inter alia*, the administration of noxious animal control. The Act required *occupiers* of land (not necessarily the owner) to “fully and continuously suppress and destroy” noxious animals on the land.
- A quantum leap in rabbit control occurred with the introduction of the myxomatosis virus as a biological means of controlling the species. The disease induced by the virus is infectious and highly lethal. It only affects rabbits. The initial introduction of the virus into the general rabbit

population in 1950 near the Murray River in NSW followed laboratory and field trials conducted by the CSIRO that extended for more than a decade.

- In 1989 Parliament passed the Rural Lands Protection Act which replaced the Pastures Protection Act of 1934. Under that Act the Pastures Protection Boards and districts were re-named Rural Lands Protection Boards and districts. The same philosophy regarding noxious animals and insects was transferred into the 1989 Act.
- There was a further major advancement in the biological control of rabbits with the spread of the Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD). RHD is established by an airborne virus that affects only rabbits. This includes both the wild type and the derived domestic strains of the European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*).

In October 1995 the virus escaped (most likely on bush flies) from the quarantine area of Wardang Island, South Australia. During ensuing months the virus spread to many areas, including as far as eastern NSW. It is more effective in the drier western areas of the State. Like the myxoma virus, it is not a panacea for rabbit control.

- Parliament passed a new Rural Lands Protection Act in 1998 commenced on 17 September 2001. Under that Act the same three species of vertebrate pest as in the 1989 Act will be subject to compulsory landholder control.

As you may be aware, the Board system today covers 48 separate Districts across NSW. All Boards carry out four main functions of management. They are corporate, animal health, travelling stock reserve and pest animal and pest insect management.

The Boards are the peak body involved in pest animal and insect control in NSW. The RLP Act 1998 sets out the conditions under which animals, birds and insects can become "declared" pests and provides the process and mechanism for the control of such pest species. Gazettal of pest species occurs through Pest Control Orders that allows the Minister for Primary Industries to specify which species are pests, either on a statewide or local basis, and the conditions or factors that apply to the control of each pest.

Currently, wild rabbits, wild dogs and feral pigs have been declared pest animals and the Spur-Throated, Migratory and Australian Plague Locusts have been declared pest insects throughout NSW. The pest animal and insect status imposes an obligation on each landholder, including public land managers and local government authorities, to eradicate (continuously suppress and destroy) these declared pest species.

There are broad powers prescribed in Section 143 of the 1998 Act relating to the issue of Pest Control Orders by the Minister for Agriculture. These are reproduced in Appendix B.

While not formally declared, Boards assist land managers to control foxes and mice to minimise their agricultural and environmental impacts. Effectiveness of feral pig control also has important implications for exotic disease preparedness and control, particularly in respect to foot and mouth disease.

Where private landholders do not meet their obligations, Boards may serve an order requiring an individual owner or occupier to eradicate the pest. The Minister for Primary Industries may make similar orders in respect of public land. If these orders are not carried out, provisions within the RLP Act 1998 confer powers on authorised officers to take measures or carry out work to eradicate the pest. This includes the power of entry onto land to determine compliance with an order and/or obtain information or carry out duties conferred under the RLP Act 1998. The cost of any such work is charged back to the owner or occupier. Having said that, Boards rarely need to make such orders in agricultural areas because measures to enforce compliance are seldom required when landholders understand their responsibilities.

It should be noted that Boards employ and train highly specialised professional vertebrate pest control officers in NSW. These officers are mostly in the field coordinating and implementing pest control programs across their respective districts on a daily basis to assist landholders carry out their control obligations under the RLP Act 1998. They are also in touch with the landholders who manage their properties as a business and are attuned to the farming and natural environmental processes surrounding property and farming activities.

The role of the Boards is to -

- be the principal regulatory body at the local level in relation to pest animal control;
- provide landholders with certain materials used in the control of such animals, including baits treated with 1080 poison (such materials are supplied at cost price);
- supply advice on suitable methodologies for the control of such pests;
- undertake inspections of land to ensure that the requirements under the Act are being fulfilled; and
- carry out enforcement procedures as necessary, such as performing necessary work and then seeking to recover costs.

Boards work on vertebrate pest control with assistance from NSW Agriculture. This assistance involves matters such as the provision of research, training in vertebrate pest control, certain policy issues and the coordination of activities.

Prescribed methodologies for the control of pests under the RLP Act 1998 include those that are legal at this point in time. Generally, these methodologies include:

- a) the use of pesticides registered by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority, or the use of which is otherwise permitted or authorised by the Pesticides Act 1999, for the purpose of suppressing and destroying animals of the species concerned;
- b) fumigating;
- c) digging in or out;
- d) ploughing in or out;
- e) use of explosives by the holder of a certificate of competency as a powderman under the Construction Safety Act 1912;
- f) trapping (cage or soft-jawed traps);
- g) removing or destroying the habitats and refuges of pest animals;
- h) ripping;
- i) shooting, including shooting from aircraft;
- j) use of registered biological control agents such as myxomatosis and Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease.

(Appendix C outlines control methods/species matrix for vertebrate pests in Australia.)

The methodology used in a particular case depends on the species involved and other matters such as the specific environment in which the control is to be effected. For example, it may not be suitable to use 1080 poisoned baits in a semi-rural environment.

There are various pesticides, dose rates, bait types, etc applicable to different species of pest animal. These details are summarised in Appendix D.

Submission Detail

- 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.*

Nationally significant pest issues would include the agricultural, environmental, social and livestock and human health impacts that feral pigs, wild dogs, wild rabbits, foxes and plague locusts pose in Australia.

National Pest Animal Body

A national body or authority through which a National Pest Strategy can be driven seems to be the missing link in the lack of coordinated pest control efforts particularly in relation to cross state and territory border relations and coordination. It is understood that currently the Federal Government is considering such a strategy.

National Database

Also missing is a national database highlighting past and current research in the vertebrate pest control and management, as to the control techniques and strategies used across Australia. Instead of researchers and practitioners reinventing the wheel, the database should allow relevant people in the pest field to access what has been researched (or is currently being researched), or techniques used over Australia and build on what is already existing, as well as “fill-in” any gaps in our knowledge. Such a database would also allow states and territories to pool resources where effective and build more interstate collaboration, not competition.

Knowing what research has been done, or what control techniques are being used can allow others to build on what has been achieved, enhance a certain operation and create a more focussed research projects.

Education

The promotion and education of the wider community of pests and their wide ranging impacts need to be made known, not only are there impacts to agriculture, but impacts on conservation and biodiversity values as well as social impacts.

There is also a need to educate landholders that move into rural areas or impinge on agricultural areas – urban and peri-urban encroachment. New landholders bring with them pets and possibly not much rural understanding. Companion animals, for instance dogs, cats and to a lesser degree rabbits, can cause problems to others outside of their property where supervision of the animal is not adequate.

Social Impacts

Impacts that also need to be taken into account, but you can't place an economic price on are social aspects on the affected landholder – not just the cost of control in terms of materials and time or labour, but the emotional stress associated with survival in their chosen industry, fear and anguish, frustration, the loss of productive land, the sleepless nights wondering when the next attack will happen, family and community breakdown, loss of self esteem or face in the community etc.

2. *To consider the approaches to pest animal issues across all relevant jurisdictions, including*
- *Prevention of new pest animals becoming established;*
 - *Detection and reporting systems for new and established pest animals;*
 - *Eradication of infestations (particularly newly established species or ‘sleeper’ populations of species which are considered to be high risk) where feasible and appropriate; and*
 - *Reduction of the impact of established pest animal populations.*

The RLPB system has considered this issue over the last few years and at the 2002 State Conference, Boards voted to implement an IT Strategic Plan (ITSP) which “provides a low risk, low cost solution” to a number of computer problems which have troubled the Board System for some time.

Under the plan work is currently underway to upgrade the existing hardware situated in the Boards. This includes new PCs and file servers as well as local network infrastructure. The Boards are also being linked together using the internet via a Virtual Private Network (VPN).

The single most important part of the IT Strategic Plan is the construction of a new piece of software that will improve in the day to day running of the Board offices. Termed, the Software Application Suite (SAS), development is currently progressing rapidly with a rollout of the new suite expected to commence before the fourth quarter of 2004. The completed system will be available mid 2005.

This system includes a mapping module that will unlock Board data by providing a geographic component or spatial view of the information currently held only as text. This will enable Board staff to identify specific parcels of land using electronic maps and then automatically determine all of the characteristics of that piece of land.

The SAS will also include a Pest Animal Database which will allow Boards to record any sightings or occurrences of pest animals as well as any bait that has been distributed to landholders. This will help in the overall management of these pests.

When the Pest Animal Database and Mapping systems are used in combination they will provide an extremely powerful tool. It will electronically display up to date district occurrences and baitings. This will greatly improve the coordination of pest animal eradication projects.

A hand held option is also being considered which will give Board staff a mobile computer facility. This is designed to put the power of the computer into the hands of those staff members who are most often the first and only point of contact for many landholders.

Free flowing pest information between states on pest and emerging pest issues to better equip practitioners with solutions to local problems is a must. This is where a National Pest body or authority with agreement from the states and territories would be of benefit. At this point in time however, the Vertebrate Pest Committee (volunteer committee with state and territory representation) has no legislative power to carry out such functions.

There is also a need to consider the effects exotic animals have had or could have on agriculture if introduced and/or liberated in Australia, or if they escape enclosures or farming situations. The need for fencing standards and licensing would be a means by which exotic animals are more likely remain on the property of intent.

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.*

Funding

Additional funds and expenditure for pest control in NSW, outside of government crown lands operational budget for pest management (National Parks, State Forests, Department of Lands and the like) is minimal. At this point in time, the State Government commits:

- \$60,000 per annum to assist with some of the costs associated with cooperative wild dog control programs across NSW (administered by NSW Agriculture), and
- a \$1 million drought initiative in 2002 which went towards the control of feral pigs and foxes in western NSW (ie. not on going, but a one off grant that was administered by NSW Agriculture).

It should be pointed out that the NSW Government provides \$6.7million funding per year for noxious weed control in NSW that stakeholders can access. It is this funding that provides the community with the opportunity to cooperatively control weeds that pose a threat to human and livestock safety and well as capitalise on conservation, environmental and biodiversity benefits and outcomes. This small amount state wide benefits the whole community.

With regard to National Parks in NSW, generally the NPWS, RLPBs and other pest animal and insect stakeholders are building up a good working relationship when it comes to pest management.

Good examples include the Brindabella and Wee Jasper Valleys Cooperative Wild Dog/Fox Program (See Appendix E), the South West Rabbit Control Program and the Outfox the Fox Project. The aforementioned plan was formed by all stakeholders involved in wild dog and fox control concerned at the lack of planning and coordination of control programs across the two valleys. The participants included landholders from the two valleys, the RLPB, NPWS, State Forests, a wild dog control specialist and a member from the South East NSW and ACT wild dog project. This group established costs for a large scale coordinated control program that involved trialing a 12 month management plan. The first public quarterly review meeting of the plan showed overwhelming landholder support, which commended the working group on their efforts for this cooperative program. The plan has now been in operation for over two years and the results and achievements of the plan include:

- reduced wild dog attacks by 80%,
- allowing some areas to return to grazing,
- returning positive personal and social values and benefits that were stymied by wild dog attacks, and
- better coordinated expenditure on resources (financial and labour).

See Appendix F for further support to the program.

Another example of cooperation is the South-West Rabbit Control Program which encompasses 1.8 million hectares of south-western NSW. Eleven landcare groups, RLPBs, NPWS and other stakeholders have achieved effective rabbit control through the destruction of over 40 000 rabbit warrens.

The primary aim of this program was to capitalise on RHD which reduced rabbit numbers in the study area. Existing landcare groups embarked on destroying as many rabbit warrens as possible in the shortest possible time. The project coordinator organised the ripping activities. The project has reportedly ripped approximately 40 000 warrens at an average cost of \$7.21 /warren.

Case studies on the project revealed that due to the reduction of rabbits, land managers could expect better ground cover, a better quality and quantity of vegetation, less competition for pasture, less

degradation and a much reduced impact on the environment. Also, in grazing situations, the reduced impact of rabbits should increase livestock productivity and allow stock to be carried longer into dry times where stocking rates remain consistent with the country's carrying capacity. Appendix G provides the committee with further information.

'Outfox the Fox' is the largest strategic, coordinated fox baiting program in NSW, with over one fifth of NSW pastoral regions participating in group baiting (baiting for foxes at the same time as their neighbours). The program aims to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of landholder 1080 (sodium monofluoroacetate) baiting practices (Balogh and Gentle *et al.* 2001) and ultimately reducing the number of lambs killed by foxes. At each baiting period around 50 000 fox baits are placed. With a decrease in the number of baits an individual needs to place to reduce the density of foxes over a large area.

The program began in September 1999, with 700 landholders participating and has now grown to over 1 400 participating landholders, and several NSW National Parks and Wildlife regions, State Forests, Crown Land and Reserve Trust areas. 'Outfox the Fox' targets two times of year for baiting: March when juvenile foxes disperse from their natal den to seek their own territory and September when vixens require additional food for whelping. The baiting program has been successful in raising awareness and participation (Balogh and Gentle *et al.* 2001).

These examples are three of many that highlight what can be achieved in pest animal management when liaison is strong and cooperation, agricultural production and environmental conservation are the main objectives.

Stakeholder Participation

As a whole, pest controllers need to consider all players when controlling pest animals. Consultation can breed enthusiasm and teamwork. Working cooperatively on pest animal control issues tends to better identify and clarify the whole pest issue, increases pro-activity, increases accountability, improves resource efficiency and satisfies both agricultural production outcomes and environmental conservation benefits. The NPWS are vastly improving their liaison with stakeholders on pest animal management issues however further resources are still required to fully explore this process.

Working in Cooperation with RLPBs

To help aid in the stakeholder consultation on pest management issues, and for the overall administration and management of pest in National Parks Estates, NPWS should be commended for the foresight to tender out such duties to local Boards. This tendering has provided the Board with an opportunity to work in closer liaison with the NPWS and landholders on the fringe of estates. This has in turn provided open communication and understanding of the management practices of both the NPWS and the landholders, which has increased the coordinated group control programs at these interfaces. The move has provided a harmonious situation for all parties as reinfestation from previously uncontrolled pest populations has drastically reduced. The NPWS are also being seen in better light by the local landholders as they are working along side the landholders in pest control and spending money on pest control through the work of Boards.

Contracts with NPWS

The NPWS/Board contractual arrangements employed over more of the state would see the NPWS overhead costs reduce, and more efficient pest control programs initiated. As previously mentioned, Board pest animal Rangers are trained in the biology and control of all pest species, are authorised to mix, issue and use restricted use pesticides, are accredited chemical users and have the ability to set up group control programs, and have the power under the RLP Act 1998 to enforce these control programs if necessary.

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

The only downfall with pest control is that it is a relatively small niche market where research and development costs for new products exceed any return on investment let alone break even. However, with government sponsorship or incentive to play a roll in pest animal operations, industry groups and research and development corporations could play a more proactive role and response.

In an attempt to overcome some of these hurdles, State Council and Boards fully support the Commonwealths Cooperative Research Centre Programme 2004 administered by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). In particular, State Council has devoted specific contributions to the Australasian Invasive Species CRC selection round bid currently before DEST.

The CRC bid states: “Invasive animals (meaning to include introduced and native animals that may become overabundant and pose threats to agriculture, the environment or human health and safety) cost Australasia at least \$720 million p.a. (McLeod 2004) through environmental, economic and social damage. Most agricultural sectors suffer significant economic losses from invasive animals. Most notably, these losses occur through predation of livestock, crop damage, competition for feed and costs of control. Invasive animals have been a major factor in Australia’s unenviable record of having nearly half of the known mammalian extinctions worldwide in the past 200 years. Invasive animals are also identified as threatening 14 of Australia’s 15 World Heritage Listed areas and 13 of 15 “Biodiversity Hotspots”, and are strongly implicated in the serious decline of Australia’s native freshwater fish populations. Invasive animals have markedly altered our landscapes, reduced our biodiversity and disrupted communities through events such as mouse plagues”.

There are in excess of 30 national and international collaborators associated with this proposal who are prepared to contribute resources and time (either in kind, monetary and the like) to make the bid successful. Is there an opportunity to pursue and promote a National Pest Committee or Authority through this vehicle? I urge the committee to review the aims and objectives of this truly national cooperative program effort.

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

There is a great need for the community to understand and be involved in pest animal control and management. Also, to make them aware of some of the consequences of liberating, not only pest animal species, but domestic animals where there is limited supervision by owners. There is of course the need to explore and highlight the threat to livestock and human health issues that pest animals pose for example hosting and spread of FMD or hydatids in dogs and foxes. Economic considerations need to be further explored.

Urbanisation

An emerging issue that needs to be considered is the encroachment of urban and residential developments on grazing and agricultural areas. Urbanisation brings families and domestic dogs (as well as cats and to a lesser extent pet rabbits). Unfortunately, reports submitted by Boards to State Council and NSW Agriculture show that unrestrained domestic dogs are increasingly harassing, attacking, injuring and killing livestock. In some areas, unrestrained town dogs are now the most significant pest animal problem. While there is an obligation on companion animal owners to

supervise and control their animals, and for Councils to enforce these provisions, this is clearly not happening in many cases.

Domestic Dog Propensity

The propensity of dogs to undertake 'surplus killing' is well documented and means that just a few dogs are able to cause significant damage to a large number of livestock. This damage is not just limited to death, injury or even to the suffering and cost of treating injured animals. It also includes the cost of infrastructure and management in attempting to minimise further attacks and the emotional anguish of livestock owners confronted by the sight of maimed animals and the uncertainty of when or where the next attack will occur. In the worst cases graziers are forced to destock paddocks, even seeking alternative enterprises, with some graziers having actually been threatened by dogs themselves.

By way of example, there have been over 80 confirmed cases of domestic dogs attacking livestock in the Goulburn Rural Lands Protection Board District during 2002. These dogs have killed or mauled over 900 animals including calves, sheep, lambs, alpacas and geese.

Companion Animals Owner Obligations

There are very few options available to efficiently and effectively control dogs in grazing country close to urban and peri-urban areas because of tight regulatory restrictions needed to ensure the safety of people and other pets. However, local government legislation provides both the authority and responsibility to ensure that domestic dogs are competently restrained. Since it is the unrestrained domestic dogs that are causing these increasingly serious problems, there is a real need to effectively enforce companion animal owners obligations under the legislation and for landholders to be made aware of the issues.

Local government legislation defines the responsibility of dog owners and creates offences if an owner's dog is involved in an attack. It also provides for an occupier of the land to lawfully injure or destroy a dog not under the effective control when it is on that owner's property and could molest, attack or injure their stock. However, most attacks on livestock occur when no one is in attendance. In fact in most cases, the first a grazier knows about an attack on their livestock is when they carry out a routine inspection of their stock. It is at that point that the grazier comes face to face with dead, dying, injured and maimed stock.

This problem will continue to increase if nothing is put in place to address this issue. Consequently many graziers are already reassessing their ability to run livestock given the constant threat of attack by domestic dogs. I would also reiterate that this issue is increasingly impinging on human safety and the safety of other pets.

Boards have reported that contrary to previous years, feral pig activity, impacts and numbers have declined due to the limiting environmental conditions. Most Boards across the state recorded a decrease in feral pig populations. This only intensified the need to continue with coordinated aerial shooting, and ground based trapping and poisoning programs.

Boards report that feral pigs continue to appear in areas where they haven't previously been identified and are reappearing in areas immediately after a successful local eradication program has been implemented. The unscrupulous act of releasing feral pigs into these areas has been the focus of intensified surveillance and monitoring of this illegal practice. This activity not only causes local impacts on the environment and agricultural production, it could also have far reaching consequences in terms of the ability to quickly and efficiently shut down any incursion of endemic or exotic disease to these areas. The Board system, NSW Police Force and public land managers will continue to target this practice of transporting and releasing feral pigs over the coming years.

An important outcome of this submission in relation to the domestic dog issue and the illegal practise of introducing feral pigs into new areas (or anywhere for that matter) is the need for education.

Overview

Pest animals pose a serious on-going problem because of the combined effects of their high reproductive rates, few fatal diseases and few natural predators. In many ways European settlement has facilitated the growth of pest animal populations by providing good pastures, stock which serve as prey, watering points, etc.

Pest species not only have deleterious effects on agricultural production and cost millions of dollars annually in control efforts and lost production, but they also have a devastating effect on landholders whose stock are predated upon, as well as native fauna and flora, including threatened and protected species. Social impacts associated with pest animals can not be ignored or under rated.

This submission concentrates on the efficacy of "traditional" pest animal control methods which may be adopted by landholders, and the limited role of biological control. In the Pastures Protection Act 1934 there was considerable emphasis placed on the erection and maintenance of "rabbit, wild dog and marsupial-proof fences" as a means of inhibiting the migration of pest animals. It appears that because of the prohibitive costs of erecting and maintaining fences of a sufficient standard, the fostering of this type of pest animal control is unfortunately now not appropriate.

There is obviously a need to depend on the traditional methods of control, at least in the foreseeable future. However, hopefully in due course research will provide new biological controls which will significantly reduce or eradicate certain pest animal populations. There is also a need to develop more control techniques for pests in urban and peri-urban situations.

Of major relevance in pest animal management is the use of 1080 poison to control various pest species. The crucial importance of this chemical in pest species control cannot be overemphasised. In many ways it is the primary tool in controlling such pests. Without the continued availability of 1080 poison for this purpose, the deleterious effects of the pest species would no doubt increase to disastrous levels. State Council and Boards are aware of the opposition to the use of 1080 which comes from various individuals and organisations. However, the benefits of use of the chemical for pest control far outweigh any problems associated with its use.

There is indeed an urgent need for a far greater allocation of financial and other resources to control the present pest animal problems in NSW and of course interstate. State Council urges the government to seriously consider an increase in its annual allocation of grant monies through its Feral Animal Grants Program where large scale control efforts are identified. Both within a state/territory, and across border control.

The need to immediately progress a National Pest Animal Strategy has been highlight in this submission and State Council commends this recommendation to the Standing Committee.

State Council would welcome the opportunity to speak to the committee on the matters raised and recommendations put forward where the opportunity presents itself. State Council could also organise field trips to areas of state where effective large scale coordinated pest control programs are being carried out in NSW, to observe the process, its issues and outcomes first hand. The

Brindabella/Wee Jasper wild Dog and Fox control program in south east NSW, or the south west rabbit control program are prime examples.

I thank you for the opportunity to provide you with the above information. Please do not hesitate to contact Chris Lane, Pest Animal and Insect Manager on (02) 6391 3615, if you would like further explanation of the issues and comments raised.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Orr
Chief Executive Officer

APPENDIX A: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 5 FROM THE
INQUIRY INTO FERAL ANIMALS.

APPENDIX B: RURAL LANDS PROTECTION ACT 1998 – SECTION 143.

APPENDIX C: CONTROL METHODS/SPECIES MATRIX FOR VERTEBRATE PESTS
IN AUSTRALIA.

APPENDIX D: VERTEBRATE PESTICIDES USED IN NSW.

APPENDIX E: COOPERATIVE WILD DOG/FOX CONTROL PLAN – BRINDABELLA
AND WEE JASPER VALLEYS.

APPENDIX F: LETTER OF SUPPORT - COOPERATIVE WILD DOG/FOX CONTROL
PLAN FOR BRINDABELLA AND WEE JASPER VALLEYS.

APPENDIX G: NSW WESTERN DIVISION RABBIT CONTROL.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION HELD BY THE COMMITTEE

ATTACHMENT TO SUBMISSION NO. 81

ATTACHMENTS, APPENDICES AND PHOTOGRAPHS PROVIDED WITH SUBMISSIONS
ARE HELD IN THE COMMITTEE OFFICE