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The Secretary
Agriculture Forests & Fisheries
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Inquiry Into The Impact On Agriculture Of Pest Animals

Introduction

This submission is being submitted to address the issue of Pest Animals on Agriculture to the above House of Representatives enquiry.

The submission is being prepared by a primary producer/part-time landcare coordinator who has been employed previously as a Land Protection Officer and Parks Ranger in state government agencies.

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.
 - Where populations of nationally significant pest animals are identified it may be advantageous for the Commonwealth Government to assume total research and management, and rely on Local government to coordinate operational and compliance activities, thus eliminating the third tier of government and improving direct access from Federal Government to communities.

If implemented, this process should also prove cost efficient and provide a consistent approach across state boundaries.

2. Prevention of new pest animals becoming established.

Points to be examined in this area include:

- Stringent quarantine standards strengthened & maintained
- Imposing heavy penalties on releasing/dumping domestic animals and use the monies acquired for public education to address and discourage the practice
- Examine the potential of household pets and livestock to become feral and multiply to pest proportions.
- Restrict imports of exotic animals for pets.

Detection and reporting systems for new and established pest animals. Include the following:

- Surveys of all exotic animals with the assistance of farmers, bushwalkers, cyclists, stockmen and contractors throughout rural Australia as well as government employees.
- Circulate illustrations of pest species and information on their biology, preferred habitat and behavioural patterns.

Provide cost assistance for total eradication of new and emerging pest populations, e.g. Indian Squirrel, Fire Ant, to landholders where populations are identified – Commonwealth, State and Federal Governments including technical expertise.

Reduction of the impact of established pest animal populations.

- Improve coordination and delivery of extension programs within communities by funding community to manage its own programs including the handling, storage and use of registered poisons by providing adequate training to community representatives and utilise Commonwealth, State or Local Government resources to support communities with litigation 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.

- In Victoria pest animal control/eradication programs appear to suffer from the “big picture” approach to natural resource management and public land, including national parks, is often targeted by communities as the worst offender through inadequate control/eradication program implementation.

One of the perceived views held by communities is government’s reluctance to prosecute other government agencies and rely on private land managers to implement programs at the boundary interface, thus treating the “symptom” rather than the cause.

Direct Commonwealth intervention may serve to reduce the perceived weakness in this area.

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

- Industry groups and R & D corporations possess enormous potential to further promote the advantages of pest animal control/eradication and to assist in procuring funding for research.

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

- Community understanding of pest animals requires promotion in urban as well as rural areas. The growth in “lifestyle” land managers in rural areas warrants an increased promotion through estate agents, local government, community development and welfare agencies and non-government community groups in rural areas not directly linked to agriculture.

Grants for the development of rural enterprises may be made dependent on pest animal control programs in areas where such programs are warranted.