



14 May 2004

Mr Bill Pender
Inquiry Secretary
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Fax (02) 6277 4424

Dear Mr Pender,

The Australian Veterinary Association and the Cattle Council of Australia (with the support of the National Farmers' Federation) offer the attached submission to the Committee's Inquiry into the Impact on Agriculture of Pest Animals. In doing so, we would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Federal Government for convening this inquiry into what is certainly a major issue affecting the prosperity of Australian agriculture, and in turn the nation as a whole.

As the Committee will well recognise, pest animals place a significant impact on Australia's natural environment and biodiversity, while also imposing a tremendous economic burden to farms and rural communities. Further, and of increasing importance, is the potential for pest animals to act as harbours for exotic animal diseases and zoonoses (animal diseases that can be passed on to humans).

Pest animals have been a feature of Australian agriculture since the turning of the first sod over 200 years ago, and throughout this history there have been numerous examples of pest animal invasion and eradication programs (both successful and unsuccessful). Today, all levels of Government devote large sums of money and resources to pest animal control, while landholders bear uncounted costs, both direct and indirect, as they undertake individual on-farm initiatives.

Clearly however, this approach is not working satisfactorily. Pest animal numbers for particular important species (eg: feral pigs, wild dogs, foxes, cane toads) continue to increase despite all efforts. The Australian Veterinary Association and Cattle Council of Australia submit that the only way forward is via an approach that is coordinated from the national level.

This submission focuses on feral pigs and details the concept of a nationally-coordinated approach to their control and eradication. It is proposed that

such an approach could serve as a model to address other significant pest species (particularly wild dogs and foxes).

The Australian Veterinary Association and Cattle Council of Australia have been working together for some time in the pursuit of a national approach to the issue of feral pigs. Both organisations were among the sponsors of the Cairns feral pig workshop in June 2003. Both have also made a joint submission to the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee inquiry into the regulation, control and management of invasive species and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Invasive species) Bill 2002, and have also responded to the Draft Threat Abatement Plan for "Predation, Habitat Degradation, Competition and Disease Transmission by Feral Pigs" produced by the Department of the Environment and Heritage.

In our submission the Australian Veterinary Association and Cattle Council of Australia recognise the many disciplines and stakeholders involved in the control of pest animals. We believe that a coordinated national program is necessary if threats and risks from these animals are to be eliminated. In this context we consider that a coordinated national plan and oversight by a committee involving stakeholders is necessary and would form the basis for future action and costings. Importantly, additional funds are not being sought, rather more effective use of existing resources and maintenance of gains made through securing the assistance of all affected by feral pigs through a national partnership.

The Australian Veterinary Association and Cattle Council of Australia commend the suggested approach outlined in our submission to the inquiry and request the opportunity to present our position in person should public hearings be scheduled. Additionally we offer expertise from our respective organisations to assist in the implementation of the suggested approach.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Norm Blackman
President
Australian Veterinary Association



Keith Adams
President
Cattle Council of Australia