



The Impact of Pest Animals on Agriculture

Harvesting pest animals may improve agricultural productivity

A federal parliamentary committee looking into the impact of pest animals on agriculture has been told that part of the solution may be to harvest the pest animals as a resource.

The House of Representatives Agriculture Committee visited Tasmania on 29 and 30 March, conducting a public hearing and a number of inspections in relation to its inquiry into the impact of pest animals on agriculture.

Tasmania is unique among the states and territories in that some of the pest animals which cause the most damage are native species, such as wallabies and possums. Through the Tasmanian Game Management Services Unit, landholders on over 500 properties across the state have been assisted to develop property-based game management plans, which allow them to tailor strategies for pest animal management to the needs of individual properties.

In some cases, property-based plans allow pest animals to be utilised as a resource for landholders. The committee visited Connorville Station, where a property-based plan regulates visits by hunters to the property. Shooters are able to hunt under controlled conditions, while also helping to control the pest animal population on the property by shooting wallaby, possum and deer.

Committee chair, Mr Alby Schultz, said, "The committee's visit to Tasmania was a valuable opportunity to hear evidence from a number of parties. It is apparent that there is a continuing need for a whole range of control strategies to be available to landholders to assist in managing pest animal problems."

"The committee was interested to see how property-based game management plans are operating in Tasmania as one of a range of strategies for managing pest animals. These programs have already been utilised in some other states and would appear to have potential for development elsewhere on the mainland."

"The committee is aware that there are existing barriers to the full utilisation of the skins and meat of animals such as wallaby and possum, resulting in Tasmania missing out on significant export income. The committee will vigorously pursue this issue and see what can be done to improve access to export markets for these products."

A public hearing took place in Longford on the afternoon of 29 March. Organisations which appeared to give evidence at the public hearing included the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers' Association, Forestry Tasmania, the Forests and Forest Industry Council, the Forest Industries Association and the Tasmanian Conservation Trust.

For media comment:

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