



CORPORATE POLICY STATEMENT NO. 12

MANAGEMENT OF PEST ANIMALS

August 2015

1. OBJECTIVE

To provide direction and guidance for the management of pest animals on lands and waters managed by the Department of Parks and Wildlife (the department).

2. SCOPE

For this policy, pest animals include introduced pest animals (including introduced vertebrates and introduced invertebrates) and native invertebrates.

Management of nuisance vertebrate fauna native to Western Australia, such as species of kangaroos and birds, is dealt with through processes established under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* and is outside the scope of this policy.

The policy applies to programs for management of pest animals undertaken on all department-managed lands and waters, and those lands for which the department has responsibility for non-metropolitan, non-townsite unallocated Crown land (UCL) and un-managed reserves (UMR).

This policy is the responsibility of all departmental staff engaged in planning, implementing, supervising, monitoring or reviewing introduced pest animal management activities on department-managed lands and waters, including staff employed in specialist branches and divisions. It also applies to contractors and other parties undertaking works on department-managed lands and waters.

3. CONTEXT

The department coordinates and implements management of pest animals for a range of reasons including:

- to protect and maintain key environmental and other assets/values;
- as a good neighbour to adjoining landholders;
- to comply with required legislation and codes;
- to reduce the economic impacts of pest animals; and
- to reduce the impact of pest animals on opportunities for public use and enjoyment.

Pest animals pose a serious threat to natural ecosystems and the native species they support. The presence of pest animals may influence the loss of biodiversity through predation (notably from foxes and feral cats), overgrazing (notably from large feral herbivores and rabbits), species competition and/or disruption to ecosystem processes. Pest animals have the capacity to carry and transmit diseases to native

flora (plant pathogens), native fauna and domestic animals. The presence of pest animals may also impact on other cultural, social, economic, scientific and aesthetic assets/values.

Management of pest animals on department-managed lands, UCL and UMR, focuses on reducing the impacts of existing pest animal populations on key assets and values, whilst also preventing new incursions and eradicating new infestations (for example, on island reserves free of pest animals), as cost-effectively as possible.

There are a number of pathways for pest animal spread both into and within Western Australia. These include human activities, both planned and unplanned, and dispersal by natural means. Some pathways are more amenable to management intervention than others. Management measures may differ for different areas, circumstances and pest animal species, depending upon the potential impacts and feasibility of controlling introduction and spread.

The department will prioritise its management efforts based primarily on species-led and asset-protection-led management programs to maximise effective use of available resources. In addition, priorities may also be determined as a response to community issues and legislative requirements, as appropriate.

This policy is consistent with the Australian Pest Animal Strategy.

Further background information and management principles that inform and support this policy are given in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 defines key terms.

4. LEGISLATION

The department has responsibilities for the conservation and protection of flora and fauna on all State lands and waters under the provisions of the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* and throughout the State via the functions of the CEO under section 33(1)(d) of the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (CALM Act). For land managed under the CALM Act, these responsibilities are typically integrated into departmental activities through the management objectives of area management plans relating to the purpose(s) of the land (refer to sections 33(3)(a) and 56 of the CALM Act), or in cases where there is no management plan, as a necessary operation under section 33(3)(b) of the CALM Act.

The Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia (DAFWA) is responsible for administering the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007* (BAM Act).

The intent of the BAM Act is to control the entry, establishment, spread and impact of organisms that have or may have an adverse effect on other organisms, human beings, the environment, agricultural activities, fishing or pearling activities, or related commercial activities. Under the BAM Act, the Minister for Agriculture may declare organisms as declared pests.

Animals can be categorised as *declared pests* under section 22 of the BAM Act¹, which binds the Crown and requires consultation between DAFWA and respective departments. The department acknowledges its responsibilities under the BAM Act and seeks to achieve the department's management objectives for pest animals within the available resources. The department also acknowledges that it is unrealistic to

¹ refer to the Western Australian Organism List maintained by DAFWA

expect all pest animals to be fully controlled on, or eradicated from, department-managed lands and other lands for which the department has responsibility for the management of pest animals.

DAFWA is also responsible for administering the *Animal Welfare Act 2002* as it relates to the control of pest animals. The Department of Fisheries is responsible for administering the management of exotic fish species under the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994*.

5. POLICY

Consistent with broader departmental objectives and priorities, and within the resources available to it, the department will:

- 5.1 identify priority pest animals for management action;
- 5.2 minimise the impacts of priority pest animals on key environmental and other assets/values;
- 5.3 minimise the risk of spread of priority pest animals and seek to identify and protect those areas currently free of priority and alert pest animals;
- 5.4 minimise the impact on adjacent lands of priority pest animals present on department-managed lands;
- 5.5 build capacity for effective management of priority pest animals by integrating and coordinating control activities and develop partnerships with other agencies, landholders and key stakeholders where there are mutual benefits;
- 5.6 monitor, review and continuously improve the effectiveness of pest animal management programs; and
- 5.7 contribute to raising community and stakeholder awareness of the threat posed by pest animals, in order to gain support for appropriate management strategies.

6. STANDARDS

This policy will be supported by a range of subsidiary and other documents, to be developed and/or revised, which may include:

- Management Guidelines, such as the Guidelines for the Safe Use and Management of Sodium Fluoroacetate (1080);
- Standard Operating Procedures, such as the Safety Management Plan for Aerial Pest Animal Control Operations (Shooting);
- relevant planning checklists;
- Management Plans;
- Threatened species recovery plans; and
- Monitoring Protocols.

Staff will have regard for other departmental policies and other relevant legislation and documents when conducting pest animal management programs.

7. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

To implement these policies the department will endeavour to:

7.1 Identify priority pest animal species and key assets/values at risk

- Develop, review and apply a prioritisation process that identifies and rates pest animals based on potential impacts and invasiveness, and that considers legislative obligations, key environmental and other assets/values at risk, including threatened species and recovery programs, and feasibility of achieving eradication or control.
- Develop, maintain and apply surveillance and mapping/recording systems for monitoring priority pest animal status and management activities.
- Identify and where possible monitor other pest animals present in Western Australia that have the potential for undesirable impacts (alert and sleeper species).

7.2 Pest animal management

- Develop and maintain plans, guidelines, standard operating procedures and protocols, informed by operational and research knowledge, to guide staff in prioritising the allocation of available resources.
- As appropriate, place conditions on approvals for planned disturbance operations to i) minimise the impacts of existing pest animal populations on key assets and values, and minimise the risk of introduction and spread of pest animals, and if required, to ii) undertake humane pest animal management activities.
- Develop and review information on priority pest animals including the identification, distribution, preventative hygiene and control methods, and as appropriate, make this available to relevant staff, contractors and stakeholders.

7.3 Training and certification

- Ensure relevant staff, contractors and partner organisations have the necessary knowledge, skills and certification to develop plans and undertake safe, humane, effective and coordinated management of priority pest animals.

7.4 Expertise and research

- Undertake and promote research into the identification, distribution, biology, ecology, impact and control of priority pest animals.

7.5 Capacity building and consultation

- Build capacity for effective management of priority pest animals by integrating and coordinating planning and control activities where landholders are most active and where combined efforts will have the greatest public benefit, and continue to develop partnerships in this regard.
- Cooperate with other relevant agencies to ensure requirements for notification of pest animal species are met, and as appropriate, participate in biosecurity and containment efforts.

- Liaise with relevant agencies and stakeholders to facilitate knowledge transfer, awareness raising and capacity building, for managing the spread of priority pest animals.
- As appropriate, represent Western Australian pest animal issues to Commonwealth Government bodies such as the Invasive Plants and Animals Committee and the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre.

7.6 Improving performance

- Monitor, review and continuously improve the effectiveness and applicability of pest animal management techniques and strategies and implement adaptive management as required.

8. CUSTODIAN

The Director Forest and Ecosystem Management, is accountable for the recording, storage, review and dissemination of this policy statement.

Responsibility for priority pest animal awareness-raising, training and the preparation of manuals and guidance notes rests with the Director Forest and Ecosystem Management, with assistance from Corporate Services Division. Corporate responsibility for firearms use rests with Corporate Services Division.

Responsibility for the implementation of this policy across the department's regional operations rests with the Director Regional and Fire Management Services.

The Director Forest and Ecosystem Management, may establish groups involving representatives from relevant departmental divisions and others as required, to coordinate related activities, including implementation and review of this policy and related guidelines.

9. PUBLICATION

This policy will be made available on the department's website and intranet.

10. KEY WORDS

Pest animal, feral animal, prioritisation, management, control, declared.

11. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed no later than 30 June 2019.

12. DIRECTOR GENERAL APPROVAL

Approved by



Jim Sharp
DIRECTOR GENERAL

Effective date: 20 August 2015

POLICY BACKGROUND

1. BACKGROUND

The Department of Parks and Wildlife has statutory responsibilities that include managing pests in the State's national parks and other reserves, which cover a total area of more than 27 million hectares. The department is also responsible for the management of pests on a further 89.5 million hectares of non-metropolitan, non-townsite unallocated Crown land and unmanaged reserves.

The number of known pest animals in Western Australia has been steadily increasing since European settlement. There are over 80 species of introduced vertebrate pest animals in Australia including 24 mammals, 26 birds, six reptiles and 31 fish species, and many of these are also found in Western Australia. The major impact of pest animals on native species and environments is from introduced predators, such as foxes and feral cats, and feral grazing animals, such as goats, donkeys, escaped stock and camels. Invertebrate pests include native species such as the jarrah leafminer and introduced species such as the European House Borer, feral honey bee and the big headed ant. Invertebrate pests such as the 'tramp ants'² are not known to be in Western Australia, but have the potential to significantly impact on environmental, social and economic values. Without active management of known spread pathways, the list may continue to grow and if key assets/values are not protected from priority pest animal threats, there is an increased risk of species extinction, disruption to ecosystem processes and adverse impacts on the unique character of many places valued by the community.

The two primary approaches to pest animal management are i) the management of pest animals that are already present and ii) preventing the establishment of new pest species. It is accepted that prevention and early intervention are the most cost-effective techniques for managing pest animal incursions, relative to the cost of protecting assets once pest animals have become established. Although the department's management responsibilities and legislated jurisdiction are principally focused at minimising the impacts on threatened species of pest animals already present (such as foxes, feral cats and feral goats), it works with DAFWA and others to promote effective risk assessment, surveillance, border protection, preparedness planning, incursion response and monitoring, to minimise the risk of new pest species being introduced into and spreading within the State. Many island conservation reserves are currently free of pest animals, and biosecurity measures along with plans for rapid response to control incursions, can help maintain their pest-free status and value for conservation.

However, effective management of pest animals requires community coordination, a clear understanding of responsibilities across all levels of government, and partnerships with industry and all landholders, regardless of land tenure.

Identifying pest animal management priorities requires a risk management approach that considers an understanding of the pest animal's invasiveness, current and potential distribution, abundance and impact, and the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of eradication or management. The protection and conservation of high value environmental assets is an important consideration for the department in setting pest

² e.g., red crazy ant, tropical fire ant, little fire ant, red imported fire ant and yellow crazy ant

animal management priorities, especially for threatened native species and communities.

Risk assessments need to consider that many pest animals have high reproductive rates, are highly mobile and can rapidly replace individuals killed in control programs. Management actions that are well planned, targeted and coordinated are more likely to have lasting benefits than ad-hoc, isolated control efforts and events. Understanding the impact of a pest animal requires consideration of the actual rather than perceived pest problems, and the strategies used need to consider that destroying the maximum number of pest animals may not necessarily be the most effective means of addressing the impacts, from a holistic perspective.

Pest animal management programs should have clearly defined objectives and performance criteria. Achievement of a program's objectives and performance criteria can be monitored to evaluate the success of the management program and be used as the basis for program adjustments. The application of adaptive management principles supports pest animal management in situations where there are gaps in knowledge and understanding.

An important consideration in undertaking a pest animal management program is the cost and type of management options available to achieve the objective. The most common management options include baiting, culling, biological control, exclusion barriers and habitat manipulation. Integrated pest management, in which several management options are applied strategically, is often the most effective means of reducing pest animal damage levels, although the most appropriate approach will differ depending upon the pest species and differing circumstances in different target areas.

2. MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING PRINCIPLES

In managing the threat of pest animals to the State's biodiversity and other key assets/values on lands and waters it manages, the department considers the following principles:

- management of pest animals should be considered as an integral part of all land management.
- prevention, early detection and eradication of new pest animals are the most efficient and cost-effective means of minimising their impacts.
- investment in pest animal control should be prioritised on key assets/values at risk, and consider the degree to which management can positively alter the condition of an asset/value and be successful in the longer-term, given the likely cost and techniques/resources available.
- priorities for control rely on the provision of a clear definition of the problem and outcomes sought, i.e. specific impacts need to be identified so that the purpose of pest animal control is clear, and it is possible to judge success.
- the application of integrated pest animal management (where more than one control technique is used) may improve overall cost-effectiveness, and the likelihood that management will be successful.
- decision making should be informed by operational and scientific knowledge, and control programs should be based on an adaptive management approach to ensure continuous development and improvement, based on a framework incorporating monitoring, evaluation, feedback and as appropriate, change.

- successful pest animal management typically requires a sustained, long-term commitment.
- co-ordination between government agencies, industries and landholders is necessary to establish the requisite research, educational and legislative framework, and typically, cooperative arrangements for cross-tenure control programs are required for successful pest animal management.

GLOSSARY

In this policy:

Alert species means: a pest animal species that potentially has significant impacts and is:

- not found in Western Australia; or
- not found in a region of the department but is known to exist in an adjacent region; or
- found in the region but not on lands or waters managed by the department.

Asset means: an item of environmental, social, cultural or economic value to the community. Examples include:

- Environmental – flora, fauna, ecological communities;
- Social/Cultural – cultural heritage, recreational use of bushland, aesthetic beauty; and
- Economic – agricultural, horticultural and forest products.

Priority pest animal species means: pest animals considered by the department to have the greatest impact on key assets/values, where management is feasible.

Sleeper species means: pest animals that have currently established only small populations, but have the potential to spread widely and affect agricultural or natural environments. Environmental damage and control costs can be minimised if these species are eradicated, where feasible, or contained before they become widespread or established.

Pest animals are introduced vertebrate and invertebrate animals, and native invertebrates (but not, for the purposes of this policy, vertebrates native to Western Australia) that live in areas where they are not wanted and which have undesirable environmental or economic impacts, or both. Introduced animals that have escaped into the wild are usually referred to as feral animals. Pest animals can reduce biodiversity, or adversely affect the integrity, conservation value and processes of ecosystems. They do this by, among other things:

- impacting on native animals due to predation or via toxins;
- modifying habitats and changing the plant communities that native animals use, including by grazing, promoting opportunities for weed invasion and through spread of diseases of native plants, such as *Phytophthora* dieback;
- successfully out-competing native animals for available resources (habitat, food, water, and nesting, roosting and foraging space); and
- causing damage to soils and waterways.