

**DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT**

**POLICY STATEMENT NO.XXX**

**MANAGEMENT OF PEST ANIMALS ON CALM MANAGED LANDS**

**DRAFT - JUNE 1999**

**OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE:**

To achieve the systematic and safe management of pest animals on CALM lands, in accordance with established priorities, and consistent with CALM conservation objectives.

**1. BACKGROUND:**

**Need for management:**

Animals that cause damage to managed values can be either introduced or native. They can be animals that have been in domestication and have escaped into the wild (feral) or animals that have never been in domestication and have been introduced into the natural environment. For the purposes of this policy all animals, native or introduced that are a threat to managed values will be referred to as pest animals.

Management of pest animals is viewed as one of the most important strategies by which conservation objectives on CALM managed lands can be achieved. Pest animals have potential for serious impact on natural ecosystems, through direct effects such as predation, habitat destruction, competition for food and territory or generally through environmental degradation by selective grazing and the spread of weeds and diseases (animal or plant pathogens). Pest animal management is also an issue in maintaining good relationships with neighbours.

This Statement deals with general policy. Specific procedures and guidelines can be found in the Fox Control Manual and the Pest Animal Management Manual and can be added to or modified over time as circumstances require.

**Legal Requirement for Control:**

The Department has nature conservation responsibilities for control of pest animals on land it manages under (Section 33(1)(d) Conservation and Land Management Act). It also has responsibilities in accordance with management plan requirements (Section 56 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 has responsibilities on CALM managed lands for control of animals that are "declared" under Sections 39-41 of the Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act 1976 (ARRP Act), viz. "A Government Department shall control declared plants and declared animals on and in relation to public land under its control". However, the Agriculture Protection Board Act, 1950 (APB Act) takes precedence over the ARRP Act to the limit of any inconsistency between the two Acts. Sections 22(1), (2) and (3) of the APB Act preserve the "rights, powers, authorities or duties of any Government department".

This is interpreted as allowing CALM, in carrying out its responsibilities under the ARRPP Act, to reserve the right to decide priorities and the level of control in accordance with availability of funds.

For the purpose of this policy pest animals include species introduced from outside Australia (e.g. foxes, pigs, goats, rabbits, donkeys, camels, starlings, sparrows) or native species (e.g. emu and dingo) which may be "declared" animals under the ARRPP Act. It also addresses introduced species that are not declared (e.g. cats, rats, cattle, fish) and native fauna introduced from another area within Australia (e.g. Kookaburra or Eastern rosella).

Where native species are causing damage to surrounding private land values there is a procedure allowing the landholder to apply for a damage license under the Wildlife Conservation Act 1950. Guidance on this procedure should be sought from the local CALM Wildlife Officer.

Cattle are not considered feral under common law in Australia. Control measures must be undertaken with due consideration for assumed ownership. Guidelines are available in the Pest Animal Control Manual. Straying domestic stock other than cattle should be dealt with as for cattle.

### **Coordination and Integration**

Whenever possible, programs on CALM managed lands should be coordinated and integrated with surrounding landholders and community programs. Agriculture WA Protection Officers, Landcare groups and the Agriculture Protection Boards' Regional Advisory Committees and Zone Control Authorities are appropriate vehicles for liaison with the rural community.

As some pest animals' are State or national problems, consideration must be given to fostering and contributing to a national approach where appropriate.

Control measures should be appropriate, safe for the operator and as effective and humane as possible. Techniques involving biological control agents, trapping, mustering and shooting should be considered before opting for techniques involving toxins. If toxins are used, the naturally occurring toxin 1080 is preferred provided adequate measures are taken to manage its impact on non-target native species. This is achieved by appropriate timing of operations, bait design and ideally avoiding habitats where the non-target species occur. Use of less environmentally friendly and non-specific poisons such as pindone, arsenic, cyanide, strychnine and phosphine must only be used after careful assessment of ecological impacts and approvals set out in the Pest Animal Management Manual have been attained.

Control measures very often require an integrated approach involving various techniques: for example goats can be mustered, trapped on water points followed by ground and helicopter shoots.

### **Finance:**

Finance and manpower limit pest animal management. At the present level of funding, control of all pest animals on all CALM managed land, is not possible. Regional/District budgets should reflect priorities defined in policy 2.2 of this policy statement and achieve the maximum value for each dollar spent. All pest animal management operations need to include resources for appropriate follow up action and monitoring.

2. **POLICIES:**

2.1 Management of pest animals is to be considered in relation to their impact on the biodiversity of natural and semi-natural ecosystems.

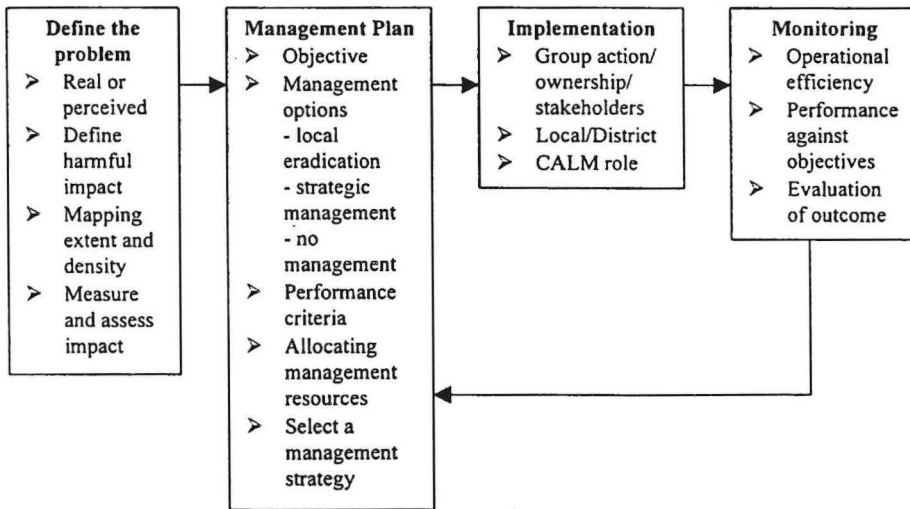
A strategic approach to the management of any pest animal or assemblage of pest animals is to be based on four key activities (after Braysher 1993):

**Defining the Problem** - The problem should be defined in terms of pest damage to identified values and the reduction in pest animal density required to reduce or prevent the damage.

**Developing a Management Plan** - Managers must establish clear objectives in terms of the desired conservation outcome sought. Options for pest animal management include local eradication, strategic management, crisis management and no management. Eradication will rarely be a feasible goal. This policy strongly recommends sustained, strategic management as the principal management option.

**Implement the Plan** - A large-scale (regional) approach to pest animal management is usually most effective. This generally requires coordinated action by both private and government land managers.

**Monitoring and Evaluating the Plan** - Monitoring has two aspects. Operational monitoring assesses the efficiency of any specific control operation. Performance monitoring involves gathering information to determine whether the strategy is meeting the desired long-term conservation goal.



2.2 Adequate measures to control or eradicate pest animals on CALM managed land will be in accordance with the following priorities:

1. Protection of threatened wildlife (flora and fauna), especially where a high risk of species extinction exists (e.g. fox predation on threatened

species or impact of exotic herbivores on rare flora) and in translocation areas. Protection of native species or communities with recovery plans will be given priority.

2. Eradication of small and / or new infestations of pest animals before they have an opportunity to become established in WA.
3. Progressive eradication of pest animals from selected offshore islands and suitable narrow necked peninsulas, e.g. Peron Peninsula.
4. Protection of other important fauna habitats and high value ecosystems which are subject to significant environmental degradation.
5. Other lands.

NOTE: These priorities will change in the event of an outbreak of an exotic animal disease

- 2.3 A high priority will be given for pest animal control and support funding on a continuing basis. One-off and sporadic control measures will not take place unless there is a reasonable prospect of eliminating a pest population.
- 2.4 All control programs will incorporate appropriate monitoring and recording of results.
- 2.5 Programs will be carried out with due regard to nature conservation, environmental protection, animal welfare, and other relevant considerations including the rights and safety of operators, CALM personnel, the general public and adjoining landholders.
- 2.6 All available methods of control will be considered (biological, physical, chemical,) the final choice depending on a comparison of the feasibility, cost, efficiency, safety and environmental efficacy of alternatives. Control will often involve an integration of techniques.
- 2.7 Research into effects of pest animals on nature conservation and into methods for pest animal control will be sponsored where necessary.

### 3. STRATEGIES:

- 3.1 Environmental Protection Branch and Regions will liaise closely with Agriculture WA and the Agriculture Protection Board including its Zone Control Authorities and Regional Advisory Committees. LCDC's and other community groups will be consulted where appropriate.
- 3.2 Each District or Region shall maintain records of pest animal surveys. Records are to be kept of control measures undertaken, the success of the program and follow up required.
- 3.3 Each District or Region shall prepare and maintain a 5 year pest animal control plan in consultation with the District/Region Nature Conservation Officer and/or an AgWA Protection Officer. The plan will form the basis for works programs. Priorities shall be in accordance with policy 2.2.

- 3.4 A Pest Animal Control Manual has been compiled and will be maintained by Environmental Protection Branch to provide guidelines for the management of pest animals.
- 3.5 Effects of toxins on humans and other non-target species must be understood and evaluated when considering a control program. Information is available from CALM, Health Department and Agriculture WA staff.
- 3.6 Staff will receive training in pest animal management, control measures and safety aspects.
- 3.7 The Department may utilize incorporated clubs and private hunters to achieve control objectives for pest animals only in exceptional situations and under strictly controlled conditions in accordance with established guidelines.

Syd Shea  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
Distribution: Lists A, B, D, E and L