



CALM BRIEFING PAPER 3/85

KANGAROO MANAGEMENT

SUMMARY

Kangaroo management is an important part of the Department's wildlife conservation responsibilities, involving interaction between Departmental officers and a range of primary producer, industry and community groups. It is also the subject of considerable interest and controversy both in Australia and overseas.

The Department's primary concern is the conservation of kangaroo populations over their natural ranges. At the same time, the Department is responsive to the needs of primary producers whose livelihood is affected when kangaroo numbers are excessive. The need for damage mitigation is met largely through the controlled culling of kangaroos by an industry which makes commercial use of the products. The industry is therefore the tool of management, aimed at keeping kangaroo numbers within limits tolerable to landholders. It is carefully regulated so that it does not threaten survival of kangaroo populations.

The Department's role is to strive to achieve a sensible balance between the needs of kangaroos and the needs of primary producers.

BACKGROUND

The killing of kangaroos has become a focus of attention for national and international conservation and animal welfare groups. The issues raised by these groups include:

- . the numbers of kangaroos killed and its relationship to the amount of damage which kangaroos cause to pastoral and agricultural production;
- . the animal welfare aspects of the killing of kangaroos;
- . philosophical and ethical aspects of the commercialisation of wildlife.

CURRENT SITUATION

The Council of Nature Conservation Ministers (CONCOM) has adopted the following as the aims of kangaroo management:

- . to maintain populations of kangaroos over their natural ranges; and
- . to contain the deleterious effects of kangaroos on other land management practices.

These aims have been endorsed by the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority and are being incorporated in the revised kangaroo management program for Western Australia.

Quotas (i.e., the maximum number of kangaroos which may be killed for the commercial trade in a calendar year) are set for three species in WA with the approval of the appropriate Commonwealth Minister. The three species are the red kangaroo (quota of 160,000 in 1985), western grey kangaroo (50,000) and euro (10,000), which are widespread and abundant in WA and in Australia as a whole. Aerial surveys in 1984 resulted in estimates for WA of slightly more than two million reds and over 680,000 greys. The aerial survey technique is not used to estimate euro populations because of the hilly habitat occupied by the species. Populations are known to fluctuate markedly in response to seasonal conditions.

Advice to the Minister on quotas and other matters is obtained from the Kangaroo Management Advisory Committee, comprising representatives from CALM, Department of Agriculture, Agriculture Protection Board, local authorities, pastoralist and farmer organisations, kangaroo shooter and processor interests, the Conservation Council of WA and the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority. The Committee is chaired by the Director of Nature Conservation (Dr Wilson) and its role and structure are currently under review.

CONCOM has also endorsed in principle a Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos. It was developed in recognition of the obligation to ensure that appropriate standards of humane conduct are applied to the shooting of kangaroos. The method of implementation of the Code is a matter for each State to determine, and in WA it is to be made a condition on shooters' licences.

CONCLUSION

Kangaroo management is a complex and contentious issue which is constantly changing nationally and internationally, with direct implications for WA, e.g.:

- . red and grey kangaroos remain listed as threatened under the US Endangered Species Act although imports are allowed;
- . The European Parliament is considering a possible ban on imports of kangaroo products;
- . the Senate Select Committee on Animal Welfare is inquiring into kangaroo management;
- . exports of kangaroo products require Commonwealth approval of State management programs, however the Commonwealth decision to approve the Queensland program is subject to a legal challenge by a conservation group.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information can be obtained from Mr Keiran McNamara at Crawley. Officers dealing directly with kangaroo management need to be familiar with a range of material including details of the Wildlife Conservation Act and Regulations, current gazettal notices, the management program (published as Wildlife Management Program No. 1; currently being updated), the leaflet 'Grey Kangaroo Management Program - A Guide for Landholders', Wildlife Research Bulletins 13 and 14, and the Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos. Copies of these can be obtained by contacting Mr Norm Press at State Operations Headquarters, Como.

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