

INCREASE IN GREY KANGAROO POPULATION

The alleged increase in numbers of Grey Kangaroos in the state during the past two years has brought criticism of the protection law and strong recommendations from some sectors of the public.

Some of the major recommendations made to the Department included :—

- (a) that landholders be compensated for damage suffered;
- (b) that existing restrictions on shooting be lifted and that each Local Authority, in agreement with the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, determine the restrictions on shooting to be imposed;
- (c) that shooters be appointed or authorized to hunt kangaroos one mile on each side of roads through forests and parks, etc.

These suggestions were investigated but were found to be impracticable and it was considered that the "Grey Kangaroo Management Programme" met best the needs of property owners and the demands of conservation.

The road hazard situation is similar in all parts of Australia where kangaroos occur. Some other states use kangaroo warning signs extensively, but so far the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife has not had support from other Government Departments for the erection of such signs in W.A.

The suggestion that hunting be allowed a mile on either side of roads where they pass through favoured kangaroo country met with non-acceptance from Police, National Parks and Forest Authorities. It was held by the critics of this proposal—

- (a) that while it might reduce numbers of kangaroos, it would not eliminate the crossing of roads by kangaroos and the possibility of collision;
- (b) it might well lull unwary motorists into a state of false security and make for worse accidents;
- (c) the risk of injury by stray bullets would be significant and would really alarm many road, park and forest workers and users;
- (d) that there were already complaints from tourists and tourist organizations of an absence of kangaroo sightings for overseas and city visitors.

Proposals have been put forward to the Commonwealth Government that funds be provided for compensation to owners of damaged property, but Canberra has not been persuaded to agree. The State has no monies available and there is considerable doubt that a reasonable damage compensation system could be devised.

It is apparent that the problem of the conflicting aims of agriculture and conservation towards both kangaroos and emus will never be entirely resolved and that the number of complaints will fluctuate, but not necessarily as a function of actual damage suffered. Some people within and outside of industry are known to have urged property owners to apply for damage licenses so that the flow of kangaroo carcasses can be increased and this has led to a significant degree of dissatisfaction.

The Grey Kangaroo Management Programme already has in-built flexibility to cope with differing situations and it is difficult to see in what respect it could be improved and still be seen to have a sound conservation approach.