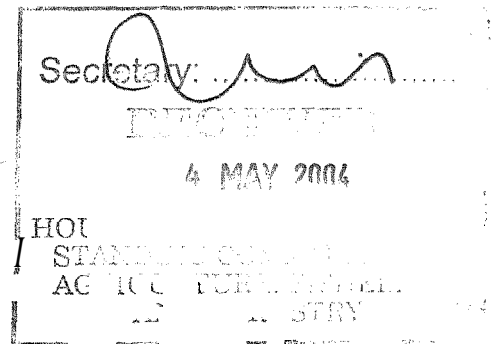


Contact: Steven Piozza

House of Representatives
 Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
 Parliament House
 CANBERRA ACT 2600



Pest Animals in our area. Shire of Eacham, Atherton Tablelands. Queensland
Pigs, Feral Dogs, Rural Residential Domestic Pops

As producers and landholders in the Eacham Shire, we have major problems with these animals. We adjoin the huge expanse of World Heritage Area in North Queensland. (Mt Bartle Frere area is on our back boundary). Pigs work up our pasture and creek banks; and feral dogs and uncontrolled domestic dogs harass and kill calves. Also dogs can carry a virus that causes cows to abort if they eat the pasture that dogs have defecated on.

The problem is not ours alone and apart from other farmers, we can see the damage that is happening in the National Park and World Heritage Area. Pigs eat eggs from ground laying birds (eg. Cassowary, Scrub Hens and Turkeys) and no doubt other wildlife. (After all a large boar can kill a calf). They have huge areas of ground worked up and also eat plenty of rainforest seeds. (food for cassowaries). Feral dogs eat wildlife. In our own patch of scrub (rainforest) we had a cassowary and 7 chicks. Feral ate the chicks. When the grown population of cassowary age and die, there will be no replacements.

Contrary to popular belief/opinion these pests major habitat is in the forest. They come out to hunt and run with domestic dogs. They reach a peak between August and November when food in the forest seems harder to obtain. The feral dogs would also eat piglets; so if there are controls to be put into in National Parks and World Heritage Areas, it is important that both species be targeted, otherwise getting rid of feral dogs alone would cause an explosion in the pig population.

We find it hard to get a 1080 baiting programme in place. Our local DNR person who is responsible to out the 1080 (we supply the meat) has not the time, as he has a large area to attend to. We have had 1 baiting this year, but what we need is an ongoing programme with shorter baiting intervals.

We attended a local Weed and Pest Management Meeting (local government included). No one seemed interested in our problem. The DNR were trying to get the council to take over 1080 baiting. The council wouldn't it as they said they had enough work and didn't want anymore government department work to bare.

We a solution; that the council obtain a 1080 dry bait that comes in packs (Doggone) from a Victorian company (which the farmers would pay for) and that the council could distribute to farmers on a basis; with work for the council. They were not interested.

The DNR (Department of Natural Resources) and QPWS (Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services) were both in attendance at this meeting. Each were declaring to the other that feral animal control was the sole responsibility of the other department and not their own - in National Parks and Wildlife areas.

At DNR seem to recognise we have a problem. QPWS see feral animals as farmers problems; and seem to have no real idea of what is happening in the parks and World Heritage Areas.

We a Strychnine permit until last year but the Department of Health would not renew it. (Actually, I think everyone in the shire were not allowed renewals as their permits expired). This was not due to misuse but new policy. The department said due to encroaching rural residential houses onto farms they could not allow renewals. If a rural residential had their dogs poisoned (didn't matter if the dogs were miles from their homes on your farmland) the outcry would be enormous and has huge political sway. (Apparently, farmers have no political sway?)

These domestic dogs (I admit not all rural residential people are so careless with their dogs) roam about unrestrained, hunting and harassing; and some never go home but join the wild dogs. A dingo breeds once a year, but domestic dogs breed twice a year and some even can breed more frequently. These wild dogs are big sturdy animals, much bigger and more aggressive than a dingo.

We a better working relationship between the DNR & QPWS & WHA management and the farmers. Each department in government seems to have its own agenda and won't share with another.

Also the people in these departments need to have the ability of an open mind and a genuine interest in their jobs. Some of our dealings with our DNR (not the poisons man) are not pleasant. Farmers are viewed as destroyers of land and it is hard to get unbiased advice from them, regarding natural resources.

Also, the public that don't have an idea about farming need to be educated on the problems their dogs can cause, if left uncontrolled. These people go to work all day with their dogs left to roam freely, day and night. A lot of them don't even realise that their dogs wander away and won't even believe you if you tell them otherwise.

The worst thing has been the "locking up" of National Parks and areas. This only leads to explosion of animals and weeds; but also attracts undesirable people to grow illegal drugs in them. Roads and tracks should be maintained for good management not the other way around.

Apparently in Germany, people are allowed to hold hunting areas that is covered by a permit system. It works very well and the permit holders are very responsible and do not hunt native wildlife out of season. There are plenty of responsible hunting clubs and people, that could clean up feral animals in National Parks. A lot of pig hunters don't even use guns.

Our mindset in Australia seems to be "the least people in our World Heritage Areas and Parks is best". This is wrong. The farms that are caught up in World Heritage Areas would be fighting weeds and feral pests. Get rid of them and you will have no one doing any control.

Yours faithfully


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Steven Plozza