



SSAA National Submission Paper

Australian Pest Animal Strategy 2017 to 2027

Consultation draft

Invasive Plants and Animals Committee

October 2016

SSAA National Response to the Draft Australian Pest Animal Strategy 2017 to 2027

SSAA Statement

The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA National) accepts the opportunity to comment on the *Draft Australian Pest Animal Strategy 2017 to 2027* (Strategy).

SSAA National has in excess of 180,000 members. We care deeply for the environment for which many of us spend time undertaking our recreational pursuits as well as participating in voluntary conservation and/or asset protection activities. Conservation and asset protection activities involve the control of a variety of pest species across both public and private land.

SSAA National and its state branches have been involved in many pest management projects. For 20 years, our Conservation and Wildlife Management (CWM) groups have been a key stakeholder in pest management across a variety of landscapes throughout our great country. Our longest ongoing commitment to active pest management in National Parks has been through Operation Bouncebank in South Australia's Flinders Ranges. This includes the Flinders Feral Predator Program.

Through this program, we have assisted the recovery of yellow-footed rock-wallaby populations and most recently, the reintroduction of western quolls. Feral cats are one of the main predators of the western quoll and pose a serious risk to their reintroduction and re-establishment. We have established a special team to target feral cats to protect this project and SSAA National has committed \$60,000 to the Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered Species (FAME) to further assist its quoll reintroduction program. We have also committed a substantial amount of funding to assist in the research and development of a new cat trap technology, which will be tested at the western quoll reintroduction release site and other locations across the country.

More recently, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Supplementary Pest Control (SPC) Program in New South Wales is proving itself as a successful component of the NPWS's integrated pest management approach. This type of pest control model has also been accepted by the wider community as an acceptable tool to remove pest animals from NSW National Parks.

Our SSAA Farmer Assist program is now operational across most of the country. This program allows landholders to use an online portal to find accredited volunteers with professional-like skills to assist with pest management as part of asset protection activities. The free pest control program can be used to find volunteers willing to undertake predator control to target species, such as the feral cats, foxes and wild dogs. The program is designed to work in collaboration with other pest management tools so it can be considered as one of the many potential options created by the community for the community's benefit.

SSAA National and its state branches are always happy to work with other stakeholders in the pest management space and we believe we have a large resource that can be motivated to participate in a coordinated way across a range of scales and land tenures.

We also believe the use of volunteer hunters and shooters is an underutilised resource and they can certainly make a greater contribution to pest animal management.

SSAA National and its state branches are also committed to the continual improvement of all our pest management programs to ensure that we provide programs that are best practice, safe, target specific and humane and meet community expectations.

The revised Strategy set out the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in pest animal management and prevention. Are these clear?

We believe the Strategy clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in pest animal management and prevention. We, as a community group, see that there are opportunities within the strategy that support our endeavour to work with all other stakeholders. The Strategy provides guidance for all stakeholders to collectively take action. Such actions could involve the support, promotion and expansion of our programs to achieve desired asset protection outcomes.

SSAA National and its state branches are happy to work with all stakeholders in a cooperative fashion to ensure that our programs lead to increased participation in sustained community-led actions. These actions can form part of integrated management of established pest animals across most land tenures.

Are the goals and priorities of the Strategy focussed in the necessary areas?

We certainly agree that effective pest animal prevention and management depends on coordinated and committed actions from a large number of stakeholders. To achieve effective results, it is vital that a framework is established that incorporates inter-agency cooperation and multiple stakeholders and it ensures engagement of all stakeholders to align pest management approaches and strategies across all land tenures.

Improving leadership and coordination of pest animal management, minimising the impact of pest animals and preventing the establishment of new pest animal species are all worthy goals.

To develop the knowledge, capacity and commitment of stakeholders to be able to take responsibility for pest animal management is indeed an important priority. It is without doubt that all stakeholders need to improve the way in which they undertake pest management and take responsibility for their roles. We are continuing to build knowledge and capacity within our organisation to ensure that we can be responsible for providing and coordinating quality pest control tools, such as our SSAA Farmer Assist and CWM programs, individually and in partnerships with governments, industry and the community.

To improve information collection and sharing mechanisms to support effective pest animal management is also another important priority. Collecting and sharing data on the impacts, distribution and abundance of established pest animals will help minimise the impact of established pest animals. Cost-effective monitoring is crucial to support containment activities and community-based reporting offers that opportunity. We are currently developing an app that will enable our members to collect and report information (similar to FeralScan) during or after their control activities. Information

from this collection has the potential to be shared with other stakeholders (such as FeralScan) to improve knowledge of pest animal populations and movements.

The priority to continue to develop and improve best practice management methods and increase overall adoption of these practices among landholders is certainly wise. Instruments such as National model Codes of Practice (CoPs) and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) provide the community guidance in conducting activities in a way that takes animal welfare considerations into account. As an organisation, we operate under CoPs that we have developed for specific programs (such as SSAA Farmer Assist) to ensure the quality of our operations. We are currently considering ways in which to link the National model CoPs and SOPs (www.pestsmart.org.au) with our own specific standards to provide more information and educational resources to our members. This potentially will further improve animal welfare outcomes.

We agree that 'best practice management' is continually evolving and investment is needed to ensure the available tools and techniques continue to meet operational needs and community expectations. Adapting, refining and utilising both old and new technologies and techniques is required to ensure continual improvement in pest animal management. This improvement must involve all stakeholders in order to be effective.

We also agree that cost-effectiveness is important for any control method. It is correct to state that if the cost to the landholder of using a particular control method is greater than the benefits received on their property, then they will not have an incentive to use it. This is certainly one of the reasons why we offer our SSAA Farmer Assist program to farmers free of cost, so they can incorporate cost-free shooting activities into their asset protection program and use the resources saved (time and money) to undertake other options (such as baiting, fencing, trapping, etc) as part of a coordinated asset protection (pest management) strategy.

The priority to increase participation in coordinated management approaches across a range of scales and land tenures is important. Time and time again, we hear that pest animals do not respect boundaries and that pest management needs to be applied across all land tenures. Having a community-based approach is certainly more effective and we support community efforts and our own involvement in such approaches.

Preventing the establishment of new pest animals is a very important goal. The introduction of new pest animals would mean the allocation of finite resources would need to be stretched further across more species, which has the possibility to undermine pest animal management gains. The development and continuous improvement of approaches that prevent new pest animals from entering and establishing is therefore in the national public interest. In the instance that a new or emerging species is identified, rapid targeted management should be given the highest priority to prevent any newly identified pest species becoming established.

We support the three stated priorities that identify the need to commit to and continuously strengthen risk-assessment approaches, improve early detection and response activities, and ensure effective management of potential pests.

The Strategy is intended to describe how pest animal management fits into Australia's Biosecurity system. Is the link between Australia's Biosecurity system and pest animal management made clear in the Strategy?

We believe that the link between Australia's Biosecurity system and pest animal management has been clearly made in the Strategy. Managing new pest animal risks at or before the border will certainly go a long way to prevent potential new Biosecurity risks. This will enable funding to concentrate on the pest animals we currently have and not split or reduce current efforts to deal with new pest animals.

Other comments

The SSAA has noticed that one thing the Strategy does not contain is specific action items. Action items usually outline what is required to ensure goals are met and outcomes are delivered. This is most unfortunate because we as an organisation would be prepared to assist in any way we can to ensure specific pest animal actions and therefore outcomes are achieved.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Godson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'M' and 'G'.

Matthew Godson

Program Leader

SSAA National Wildlife Programs