CORPORATE POLICY STATEMENT NO. 12

PEST ANIMAL MANAGEMENT

May 2022

1. OBJECTIVE

To provide direction and guidance for the management of pest animals on lands managed by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA or the department).

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the management of vertebrate pest animals, defined as animals that are introduced to Western Australia and declared as pests under the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007* (BAM Act) and its regulations.

This policy applies to pest animal management programs undertaken on land managed under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (CALM Act), *Swan and Canning River Management Act 2006* (SCRM Act) and the *Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority Act 1998* (BGPA Act). It also applies to those lands for which the department under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, manages pest animals on unallocated Crown land (UCL) and unmanaged reserves (UMR) outside the metropolitan area, regional centres and townsites (2004), where resources are available and subject to native title considerations.

Application of this policy is the responsibility of staff engaged in planning, implementing, supervising, monitoring or reviewing pest animal management activities, as well as contractors and volunteers. Compliance with the policy statement and implementation and decision making for lands managed by Statutory Authorities is the responsibility of the entities.

Management of nuisance vertebrate fauna native to Western Australia, such as species of kangaroos and birds, occurs through processes established under provisions of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* and regulations and is outside the scope of this policy.

3. CONTEXT

While the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) is the lead agency for pest animal management in Western Australia under the BAM Act, DBCA has an important role to play which includes:

- to protect and maintain key environmental assets/values;
- as a good neighbour to adjoining landholders;
- to comply with legislation and codes; and
- to reduce the impact pest animals have, or might have, on public use and enjoyment of land.

Pest animals pose a serious threat to natural ecosystems and the native species they support. The presence of pest animals may influence the loss of biodiversity through predation (notably from foxes and feral cats), overgrazing, trampling and digging (notably from large feral herbivores, pigs and rabbits), poisoning through ingestion (e.g. cane toads), competition for habitat and food and ultimately disruption of ecosystem processes. Pest animals have the capacity to carry and transmit diseases to native fauna, people (zoonoses) and flora (plant pathogens). The presence of pest animals may also impact on cultural, social, economic, scientific, and aesthetic assets/values.

Management of pest animals on CALM Act, SCRM Act and BGPA Act lands and the aforementioned UCL and UMR focuses on reducing the impacts of existing pest animal populations on key assets and values. Where key assets are potentially threatened by new incursions, the department or authority will seek to eradicate these (for example, on island reserves free of pest animals) as cost-effectively as possible, and in partnership with DPIRD where relevant. However, in built up urban environments where strategies such as baiting and shooting have limited practical application, this will need to be assessed.

There are several pathways for pest animal spread into and within Western Australia. These include planned and unplanned human activities, and dispersal by natural means. Some pathways are more amenable to management intervention than others. Management measures may differ for different areas, circumstances, and pest animal species, depending upon the potential impacts and feasibility of controlling introduction and spread.

The department will prioritise its management efforts based primarily on biodiversity asset protection management programs and will ensure effective use of available resources. In addition, priorities may also be determined as a response to community issues and legislative requirements.

This policy is consistent with the Australian Pest Animal Strategy 2017-2027.

Further background information and management principles that inform and support this policy are outlined in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 defines key terms.

4. LEGISLATION

The department has responsibilities for the conservation and protection of biodiversity and biodiversity components under the provisions of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, and the requirement to manage pest animals via the functions of the CEO under section 33(1)(d) of the CALM Act. For land managed under the CALM Act, these responsibilities are typically integrated into departmental activities through the management objectives specified in area management plans relating to the purpose(s) of the land (refer to sections 33(3)(a) and 56 of the CALM Act). Where there is no such management plan, operations may be undertaken under section 33(3)(b), or as otherwise provided for in section 56(1), depending on tenure.

The Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority (BGPA) is constituted under the BGPA Act for the care, control and management of Kings Park and Botanic Garden (reserve A1720 except Perth lots 64 and 65) and Bold Park (reserve A45409), in accordance with publicly endorsed management plans, and is responsible for administering the Botanic Gardens and Parks Regulations 1999.

The BGPA Act identifies functions and powers that underpin the management of Bold Park and Kings Park including the State's Botanic Garden, the conservation of natural landscapes, biodiversity management, research and educational programs, and the provision of recreational and tourism services and facilities.

DPIRD is responsible for administering the BAM Act. The object of that Act is to control the entry, establishment, spread and impact of organisms that have, or may have, an adverse effect on other organisms, human beings, the environment, agricultural activities, fishing or pearling activities, or related commercial activities. Under the BAM Act, the Minister for Agriculture and Food may declare such organisms as declared pests.

Animals can be declared as *declared pests* under section 22 of the BAM Act[1], which binds the Crown and requires consultation between DPIRD and respective departments. DBCA acknowledges its responsibilities under the BAM Act and seeks to achieve management objectives for pest animals within its available resources and according to conservation priorities. It is unrealistic to expect all pest animals to be fully controlled on, or eradicated from, CALM Act, SCRM Act and BGPA Act lands and the aforementioned UCL and UMR.

Animal control activities will be carried out according to National Pest Smart guidelines and best practice information and comply with the *Animal Welfare Act 2002* and associated regulations, which are administered by DPIRD.

The Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety is responsible for administering the *Work Health and Safety Act 2020* (WHS Act) and the Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations 2022 (WHS Regulations). The WHS Act and regulations place certain duties of care for safety and health at the workplace on employers and employees.

DBCA acknowledges its responsibilities under the WHS Act and regulations, and will deliver pest animal management activities according to these and other legislative requirements including those for firearms use, the *Medicines and Poisons Act 2014* and the *Code of Practice for the safe use and management of registered pesticides containing 1080, PAPP and strychnine*, administered by the Department of Health to ensure products are used according to Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority guidelines.

5. **POLICY**

Consistent with broader departmental objectives and priorities, and within the resources available to it, the department will:

5.1 identify priority pest animals for management action;

5.2 minimise the impacts of priority pest animals on key environmental assets and values;

5.3 minimise the risk of spread of priority pest animals and seek to identify and protect those areas currently free of priority and alert pest animals;

5.4 act in accordance with the department's Good Neighbour Policy and Guideline;

5.5 build capacity for effective management of priority pest animals by integrating and coordinating control activities and develop partnerships with other agencies, landholders and key stakeholders where there are mutual benefits;

5.6 monitor, review, and continuously improve the effectiveness of pest animal management programs;

5.7 incorporate and promote new research findings and treatment technologies for pest animals, where appropriate; and

5.8 contribute to raising community and stakeholder awareness of the threat posed by pest animals, to gain support for appropriate management strategies.

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[1] refer to the Western Australian Organism List maintained by DPIRD – www.agric.wa.gov.au/organisms

6. STANDARDS

This policy will be supported by a range of subsidiary and other documents, to be developed and/or revised, which may include:

- management guidelines, such as the Guidelines for the Safe Use and Management of Sodium Fluoroacetate (1080);

- standard operating procedures, such as the Safety Management Plan for Aerial Pest Animal Control Operations (Shooting), and resources available from Pest Smart https://pestsmart.org.au;

- relevant planning checklists;

- management plans;

- biodiversity management programs;

- threatened species recovery plans; and

- monitoring protocols.

Staff will have regard for relevant legislation, departmental policies and guidelines, and other documents when conducting pest animal management programs.

7. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

To implement this policy the department will endeavour to:

7.1 Identify priority pest animal species and key assets/values at risk

- Through conservation planning processes and the development of area management plans, identify priority pest animals and prioritise management activities according to their impact on values and assets.

- Where planning processes do not provide for pest animal prioritisation, prioritisation must be in the context of risk to key biodiversity values including threatened species and recovery programs.

7.2 Pest animal management

- Develop and maintain plans, guidelines, standard operating procedures and protocols, informed by operational and research knowledge, to guide staff in prioritising the allocation of available resources.

- As appropriate, place conditions on approvals for planned disturbance operations to: i) minimise the impacts of existing pest animal populations on key assets and values; ii) minimise the risk of introduction and spread of pest animals; and if required, iii) undertake humane pest animal management activities.

- Develop and review information on pest animals including the identification, distribution, and control methods, and as appropriate, make this available to relevant staff, contractors and stakeholders.

7.3 Training and certification

- Ensure relevant staff, contractors and partner organisations have the necessary knowledge, skills and certification to develop plans and undertake safe, humane, effective and coordinated management of priority pest animals.

7.4 Expertise and research

- Undertake and promote research into the identification, distribution, biology, ecology, impact and control of priority pest animals.

7.5 Capacity building and consultation

- Build capacity for effective management of priority pest animals by integrating and coordinating planning and control activities where landholders and biosecurity groups are most active and where combined efforts will have the greatest public benefit, and continue to develop partnerships in this regard.

- Cooperate with other relevant agencies to ensure requirements for notification of pest animal species are met, and as appropriate, participate in biosecurity and containment efforts.

- Liaise with relevant agencies and stakeholders to facilitate knowledge transfer, awareness raising and capacity building, for managing the spread of priority pest animals.

- As appropriate, represent Western Australian pest animal issues to Commonwealth Government bodies, such as the Environment and Invasives Committee and the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions.

7.6 Improving performance

- Monitor, review and continuously improve the effectiveness and applicability of pest animal management techniques and strategies and implement adaptive management as required.

- Where possible, implement monitoring programs that measure the success and impact of management actions on priority pest animals.

8. CUSTODIAN

The Executive Director Conservation and Ecosystem Management (CEM) is accountable for the dissemination and review of this policy statement. CEM has responsibility for coordinating delivery of the Western Shield program and the Cane Toad Strategy/program and provides oversight and advice for biosecurity groups including recreational hunting groups operating on CALM Act lands.

Responsibility for the implementation of this policy across regional operations rests with the Executive Director Regional and Fire Management Services (RFMS).

The Executive Director Botanic Parks and Gardens is responsible for implementing the policy at Kings Park and Bold Park.

Responsibility for priority pest animal awareness-raising, training and the preparation of manuals and guidance notes rests with the Executive Director CEM, with assistance from Corporate and Business Services and RFMS.

The Executive Director Biodiversity and Conservation Science is responsible for ensuring relevant research is conducted and the results made available to inform pest animal management.

The Executive Director CEM may establish groups involving representatives from relevant departmental divisions and others as required, to coordinate related activities, including implementation and review of this policy and related guidelines.

9. PUBLICATION

This policy will be made available on the department's website and intranet.

10. KEY WORDS

Pest animal, feral animal, prioritisation, management, control, declared.

11. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed no later than December 2026.

12. APPROVAL

Approved by

Mark Webb
DIRECTOR GENERAL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER   Date: 12 May 2022

POLICY BACKGROUND

1.   BACKGROUND

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA or the department) has statutory responsibility under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (CALM Act) s33 (1)(d) to promote, encourage and facilitate the conservation, protection and management of biodiversity and biodiversity components in the State. The requirement to manage pest animal species in the State's national parks and other reserves, which cover a total area of around 27 million hectares, falls under the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007* (BAM Act) and meets requirements under the department's Good Neighbour Relations Policy and Guideline, where resources are available The department, under an Memorandum Of Understanding (2004) with the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, undertakes management of pest animals on a further 91 million hectares of unallocated Crown land and unmanaged reserves outside the metropolitan area, regional centres and townsites, where resources are available and subject to native title considerations.

The number of known pest animal species in Western Australia has been steadily increasing since European colonisation. There are over 80 species of introduced vertebrate pest animals in Australia, including 24 species of mammals, 26 species of birds, and six reptile species, and many of these are found in Western Australia. The major impact pest animal species have on native species and environments is introduced predators, such as foxes and feral cats, as well as environmental impacts from grazing and habitat destruction by pigs and large feral herbivores, such as goats, horses, cattle, donkeys, and camels.

Without active management of known spread pathways, the list is likely to continue to grow, and if key assets/values are not protected from priority pest animal threats, there is an increased risk of species extinction, disruption to ecosystem processes and adverse impacts on the unique character of many places valued by the community.

The two primary approaches to pest animal management are: i) the eradication or management of pest animals that are already present, and ii) preventing the establishment of new pest species. It is accepted that prevention and early intervention are the most cost-effective techniques for managing pest animal incursions, relative to the cost of protecting assets once pest animal species have become established.

The department has responsibility to promote, encourage and facilitate the conservation, protection and management of biodiversity. The impact of pest animals on biodiversity values should be the primary focus for management activities on CALM Act lands. The department works with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and others to promote effective risk assessment, surveillance, border protection, preparedness planning, and incursion response and monitoring, to minimise the risk of new pest species being introduced into and spreading within the State. Many island conservation reserves are currently free of pest animals, and biosecurity measures, along with plans for rapid response to control incursions, can help maintain their pest-free status and conservation values.

Effective management of pest animals requires working with the community, a clear understanding of responsibilities across all levels of government, partnerships with industry and landholders, regardless of land tenure, and a common understanding of environmental objectives of management activities.

Identifying pest animal management priorities requires a risk management approach focused on the protection and conservation of high value assets, threatened species and communities. Risk management must consider: how invasive the pest animal is; it's current and potential distribution, abundance and impact; and the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of eradication or management.

Risk assessments need to consider that many pest species have high reproductive rates, are highly mobile and can rapidly replace individuals killed in control programs. Management actions that are well planned, targeted and coordinated are more likely to have lasting benefits than ad-hoc, isolated control efforts and events. Understanding the impact of a pest animal or species requires consideration of the actual rather than perceived pest problems, and the strategies used need to consider that destroying the maximum number of pest animals may not necessarily be the most effective means of addressing the impacts, from a holistic perspective.

Pest animal management programs should have clearly defined objectives and performance criteria. Achievement of a program's objectives and performance criteria should be monitored to evaluate its success and used as the basis for program adjustments. The application of adaptive management principles supports pest species management in situations where there are gaps in knowledge and understanding.

An important consideration in undertaking a pest animal management program is the cost and type of management options available to achieve the objective(s). The most common management options include killing or removal (baiting, shooting, trapping or mustering), biological or fertility control, exclusion (fencing or netting) and habitat manipulation (removal of surface refuges). Integrated pest management, in which several management options are applied strategically, is often the most effective means of reducing pest animal damage levels, although the most appropriate approach will differ depending upon the pest species and differing circumstances in different target areas.

2.   MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING PRINCIPLES

In managing the threat that pest animals pose to the State's biodiversity and key assets/values, the department considers the following principles:

1.   Management of pest animals should be considered as an integral part of all land management.

2.   Prevention, early detection, and eradication of new pest animals are the most efficient and cost-effective means of minimising their impacts.

3.   Investment in pest animal control should be prioritised on key assets/values at risk, and consider the degree to which management can improve the condition of an asset/value and be successful in the longer-term, given the likely cost and techniques/resources available.

4.   Priorities for control rely on the provision of a clear definition of the problem and outcomes sought, i.e. specific impacts need to be identified so that the purpose of pest animal control is clear, and it is possible to evaluate success.

5.   The application of integrated pest animal management (where more than one control technique is used) may improve overall cost-effectiveness, and the likelihood that management will be successful.

6.   Decision making should be informed by operational and scientific knowledge, and control programs should be based on an adaptive management approach to ensure continuous development and improvement, based on a framework incorporating monitoring, evaluation, feedback and as appropriate, change.

7.   Successful pest animal management typically requires a sustained, long-term commitment.

8.   Coordination between government agencies, industries, landholders and other stakeholders is necessary to establish the requisite research, educational and legislative framework, and typically, cooperative arrangements for cross-tenure control programs are required for successful pest animal management.

GLOSSARY

In this policy:

Asset means: an item of environmental, social, cultural or economic value to the community. Examples include:

- Environmental – flora, fauna, ecological communities;

- Social/Cultural – cultural heritage, recreational use of bushland, aesthetic beauty; and

- Economic – agricultural, horticultural and forest products.

Priority pest animal species means: pest animals of a species considered by the department to have the greatest impact on key assets/values, where management is feasible.

Pest animal species are: introduced vertebrate animal species[2], that live in areas where they are not wanted and which have undesirable environmental and/or economic impacts. Pest animal species can significantly impact biodiversity, or adversely affect the integrity, conservation value and processes of ecosystems. They do this by, among other things:

- impacting on native animals due to disease, predation or via toxins;

- modifying habitats and changing the plant communities that native animals use, including by grazing, promoting opportunities for weed invasion and through spread of diseases of native plants, such as *Phytophthora* dieback;

- successfully out-competing native animals for available resources (habitat, food, water, and nesting, roosting and foraging space); and

- causing damage to soils and waterways.

As defined in the Memorandum of Understanding (2004) with the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, the following definitions apply in relation to the unallocated Crown Land and unmanaged reserves where DBCA has management responsibilities to implement pest animal programs (where resources permit).

Metropolitan Area: means the Perth metropolitan region, as defined by section 6 of the *Metropolitan Region Town Planning Scheme Act 1959*.

Townsite: means townsites (with in section 26 of the *Land Administration Act 1997*), outside of the metropolitan area and regional centres.

Regional centre: means cities (within the meaning given by section 2.4 of the *Local Government Act 1995*) outside of the metropolitan area.

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[2] This policy applies to vertebrate pest animals.