

Kangaroo Management Advisory Panel Meeting #14
Harrison Room, OEC, 214 Darling Street
Friday 30th October 2009

Present: Josh Gilroy (DECCW), Nicole Payne (DECCW), Scott Murray (DECCW), John Farr (NSW Kangaroo Harvester's Association Inc), Dr Tony English (Australian Veterinary Association), Ray Scott (NSW Farmers Association), Dick MacFarlane (Dubbo Field Naturalists & Conservation Society), David O'Shannessy (RSPCA NSW), Marie Russell (LHPA), Greg Bates (AGMPA), Ian Brown (KIAA), Dr Clive Williams (Wildlife Preservation Society), Peter Ampt (FATE) (guest speaker).

Apologies: Sandy Bright (PAWD), Greg Markwick (NSW DPI), Patrick Medway (Wildlife Preservation Society).

Formalities

- Ratification of Minutes #13: Minutes accepted
- Adoption of Agenda. Discussion on Euros (PAWD) set down for this meeting, will be deferred to the March meeting.
- Review of Actions from #13

Action 1: Invite Peter Ampt (FATE) to address the next KMAP meeting.

Done. Item 6 on this agenda.

Action 2: Final submissions from the Panel regarding the harvester licence moratorium due by Friday 20th March 2009. DECCW to consider and determine outcome.

Done. Moratorium lifted.

Action 3: Panel to provide submissions on Bombala proposal to DECC within 3 months.

Done. Item 7 on this agenda.

Action 4: AVA will call the DECCW Manager, Wildlife Licencing to discuss "chest shot" over non-lethal head wounds for non-commercial shooting.

Not a KMAP matter.

Action 5: Harvesters' Association to put a proposal regarding mobile chillers in writing for discussion.

No proposal submitted due to pending changes in NSW Food Authority regulations.

Item 2: YTD 2009 tag allocation & take

- Allocation to date is 39% which is around 470,000 kangaroos. Historically this is the lowest since 1998, and has ramifications for both Industry and DECCW.
- The actual harvest figures are the lowest in 20 years, which was driven by the 1980s drought. Only 25% of the quota has been harvested up until the end of August.

- Beginning in July all current occupier's licences were extended until the end of the year to assist harvesters to cope with the industry downturn.
- Some zones are suffering more than others. For example the harvest in the Armidale zone is considerably higher because of the presence of a pet food works which is not impacted by the loss of overseas markets.

Comments from Industry

- It has been a terrible year for Industry. The Russian markets for all Kangaroo Products were closed late in 2008 and remain closed.
- Russia is saying this is only a temporary ban and AQIS may be ready to invite Russia to inspect sites in early 2010.
- A lot of work has been done in the field, but more needs to be done before inspections can occur.
- Talks with China have begun and AQIS is close to inviting delegates to inspect processing works. Even after this happens it may take up to two years for the Chinese to open markets. The potential market size is unknown.
- European and local markets are still firm.
- South African markets are clicking along as normal.
- 2010 should be better than 2009, particularly if other markets come on board.
- The market for heavy skins has almost collapsed. Nothing has been bought since May and the sales are the lowest in twenty years. Because of price sensitivity in the current market there has been a move towards synthetics, even though kangaroo skin is the better product.
- Carcasses now will be no older than 14 days from harvest to processing.
- The usual timeframe now is an average 5 to 7 days depending on the location of the harvester relative to the processing plant. The new rules will mean changes in logistics of trucking and harvester activity. eg delay shooting for a couple of days to better accommodate the next pick up date; numbers correctly reported to the Wholesaler at time of pick up so no carcasses are left behind.
- In cases where carcasses are left behind eg. rainfall problems, Industry will have to justify the age of the carcasses and those that don't pass inspection will be downgraded to pet food or condemned.
- The same standards will apply to human consumption and pet food carcasses.
- The Industry now needs to reinforce the changes with the harvesters, and those that don't want to accept them will be forced out of the industry.
- Box operators who do not want to take on the new standards/extra work will be forced out and Industry hopes this will make for a natural progression to better operators.
- Queensland Food Authority is well ahead of NSW Food Authority. Most of the changes in that state have already been made and a draft should be distributed before the end of the year.
- Even though NSW is lagging behind, Industry believes these changes will happen quite quickly and a lot of harvesters will be caught off guard.
- The feedback from the Harvesters' Association is that the harvesters do not understand the implications of poor quality product and there is a lot of resentment towards the new rules.

Item 3: Compliance update

- Scott Murray introduced himself to the Advisory Panel. Scott has had 18 years experience in the Police Force, in Road Safety and Enforcement and as an investigator.
- His most immediate concern with Kangaroo Management is the extent of non-compliance by harvesters, particularly in relation to submitting returns.
- Penalty notices issued year to date:
 - Body shot 13 (detected by AQIS)
 - Unsubmitted returns 44 Harvester, 3 Chiller
 - Incorrect species 2
 - Harm protected fauna 3
 - Overshoot licence 1
 - Not return tags 1
 - Not affix tags 2
 - True and accurate returns 2
 - Substitute tags 1
- This illustrates that the main offence is failure to submit returns.
- Harvesters cannot see the importance, but this has a huge impact on Industry and DECCW's obligation to report accurate figures to the Government, Panel *etc.*
- In 2010 there will be:
 - a tightening of compliance in relation to harvester returns and the inconsistencies between chiller returns and harvester returns; and
 - more random audits involving chiller versus harvester returns done in 2010.
- Harvester's Association asked if non-compliance had increased since the downturn in Industry *ie* Harvester doing two jobs and away from home - there has not been any increase; it has always been a significant issue.
- There is no formal training for paperwork for harvesters, but Kangaroo Management staff are always happy to walk them through the process. Formal training, given the large number, geographic spread and high turnover of harvesters, is not an option.
- LHPA asked if it was still possible for DECCW to cancel a harvester's licence for non-compliance. The legislation provides for licence cancellation as well as an appeal to the Minister by the person whose licence has been cancelled. Kangaroo Management will continue to consider this option where appropriate.
- DECCW believes it is the harvesters who shoot the least number of animals that are causing the most concern, because they do not realise the significance of the information that is requested.

Action 1: *Kangaroo Management will run a report on the numbers of harvesters shooting high, medium and low numbers of animals per year.*

This report run previously in 1997 showed that of 711 harvesters, total harvest approx 900,000:

- 324 Harvesters shot < 500 Kangaroos (collectively harvested 56,000)
- 460 harvesters shot <1,000 kangaroos (collectively harvested 157,000)
- 32 harvesters shot >5,000 kangaroos (collectively harvested 200,500)
- 13 Harvesters shot > 6,000 Kangaroos (collectively harvested 97,500)

Item 5: Review of centralisation

- The Panel was shown statistics on the centralised model of Kangaroo Management.
- DECCW did not foresee the Industry problems that happened this year when budget forecasts were made and total expenses for this year have exceeded revenue. This situation would have been much worse if licensing functions were still decentralised.
- Ninety percent of revenue comes directly from harvesters *ie* licences and tags sales.
- Under current industry conditions, centralisation provides the flexibility to manipulate staffing levels to better match workload - two of the five licensing positions are not filled and the Senior Project Officer position is still vacant. As the Industry situation improves and workload increases, these positions may need to be filled.
- The reduced workload has allowed time for new staff to be trained and new procedures to be developed and implemented.
- Feedback from the Harvesters' Association suggests the length of time for parcel delivery and parcels going missing, are the only major problems reported from the Harvesters. DECCW has addressed this problem by moving to a new "trackable" delivery system with Australia Post.

Item 5: 2010 Quota Report

- The results of the recent SE NSW aerial survey are not yet available. This will be discussed with the Panel in an out of session teleconference as soon as the information is available.

Action 2: *DECCW will organise a half hour teleconference with the Panel once the quota report is finalised.*

- Northern and Central Tablelands – quota remains the same. No surveys done this year.
- SENSW – quota will change but figures are not yet available.
- Total populations are down for the Western Plains:
 - western grey kangaroos down 25%;
 - eastern grey kangaroos down 18%; and
 - red kangaroos down 13%.
 - There were variations across the zones. Red kangaroo populations appear to be drifting east because of the drought. The same movements are not being seen amongst the greys.
 - Populations of eastern and western grey kangaroos in Griffith zone and western grey kangaroos in the Coonabarabran zone have declined to below the AAT thresholds. Quotas for these species have been

suspended at least until the next aerial surveys as per the AAT decision.

- This will have a limited impact in the Coonabarabran zone but will have a significant impact in the Griffith Zone because few properties have red kangaroos in sufficient numbers for harvesting to be economically viable.
- The AAT's ruling is available electronically and can be emailed or accessed from the KMP web page.
- This decision is in the Plan until it expires at the end of 2011. DECCW believes that the Commonwealth will require at least the same level of protection for harvested species in the next management plan.
- DECCW feels this is not an ideal decision but the Tribunal is the ruling body and the recommendation was made partly due to the conflicting information that was put before it from expert witnesses.

Item 6: FATE/BARG project

- Peter Ampt gave a PowerPoint presentation on the FATE program; Sandy Bright listened via telephone hook-up.
- Peter will make an Executive summary of the full report for the Panel.

Action 3: *DECCW will forward a copy of the final FATE report plus the executive summary and the PowerPoint presentation to the KMAP Panel*

Issues for KMAP

- PAWD: Thinks tags should still be "property specific" but the harvester should be able to disclose, without penalty, if he shoots off the property.
- NSW Farmers Association: The program has its good points, but cannot see this working when the Industry is trying to smarten up.
- LPHA: Property specific tags should stay. Asked where the idea of substituting kangaroos for sheep came from - the idea was originally put forward by Prof. Gordon Grigg.
- Dr English: expressed his long term personal support for the FATE program, but until the concept is validated by a credible trial, it remains just a good idea.
- Harvesters' Association: Given the new rules coming into play with Food Authority and AQIS, ie naming the property where kangaroo were harvested, this could have impacts on the wrong property. Non property specific tags makes more sense. Cannot see the benefits of the FATE program to either the harvester or the land owner.
- AGMPA: Is not a fan of the FATE program but agrees with the Harvesters' Association in regard to non property specific tags.
- DECCW: Property specific tags are a requirement of the National Parks and Wildlife Act and the penalties for shooting off properties cannot be removed.
- Industry asked what would need to change for the FATE program to work? Peter suggests:
 - Recognition from DECCW and Industry.

- Demonstrate that the landholder group could manage the harvest. This could result in a higher quality product that the wholesaler would be willing to pay more for.
- Consumer attitudes need to change. This would be good for Industry if land holders were involved.
- DECCW: FATE needs to think carefully about the development and initial stages of their project, when they were seeking DECCW's endorsement and approval. Representations from key partners in the FATE program, including landholders in the FATE group, the local landholder organisation and harvesters in the FATE program, were not positive. This lack of support placed DECCW in a difficult position with regard to assessing the proposal.
- Peter Ampt (FATE): Believes there are holes in the Industry that need to be fixed. Believes FATE can work and kangaroos would be worth more money.
- DECCW will take these issues on board when the Plan is reviewed in 2011.

Item 7: Proposed Bombala Zone

- Submissions were asked for by DECCW by the 30th June. Only three were received and they all supported the addition of the Bombala Zone.
- The Harvest Management plan requires that a new zone cannot be added unless the population has been surveyed prior. The cost of the initial survey and data analysis would be approx \$30,000.
- The industry cannot harvest what is already available.
- Harvesters were advised in their renewals for 2010 that properties of less than 10 hectares will need to have written permission from the Police to use firearms on small holdings, before tags can be issued. Therefore, information from LPHA (RLPB) means that only 390 properties in the Bombala area are large enough to harvest commercially.
- The Panel accepted that the proposal is not financially viable at this time. Unless a third party is willing to pay for the survey costs, DECCW cannot justify the expense of designing and conducting the survey.
- The proposal will be revisited in 12 months.

Action 4: *Put Bombala proposal on the agenda for meeting this time next year.*

Item 8: Other Business

Other matters as raised by members.

Pip Chalk –PhD project outline.

- Members were given a project outline from Pip Chalk who is a PhD student (UWS), interested in finding out how kangaroos are perceived in Australia. Pip would like to hear from anyone on the Panel who is interested in participating in her focus groups. Nicole Payne will be involved representing DECCW.

Renewals

- Members were given a copy of the renewal package that went out earlier in the month to all current harvesters. For information only.

LHPA

- Marie Russel advised that she will be leaving the Advisory Panel and that this meeting will be her last. Marie will spend time with the new LHPA Representative and pass on all papers and reports.
- Joshua Gilroy thanked Marie for her contribution to the Panel.
- Marie will advise DECCW by email who in LPHA we should now be contacting.

Summary of Actions:

Action 1: *Kangaroo Management will run a report on the numbers of harvesters shooting high, medium and low numbers of animals per year.*

Action 2: *DECCW will organise a half hour teleconference with the Panel once the quota report is finalised.*

Action 3: *DECCW will forward a copy of the final FATE report plus the executive summary and the PowerPoint presentation to the KMAP Panel*

Action 4: *DECCW will put the Bombala proposal on the agenda for meeting this time next year.*