

Kangaroo Management Advisory Panel Meeting #23
Cascades Motor Inn 147 Cobra Street, Dubbo
12 November 2014

Present:

Chair: Stephen Wolter, Office of Environment & Heritage (OEH)
Brad Purcell (OEH)
Ray Scott, NSW Farmers Association (NSWFA)
Greg Bates, Kangaroo Industries Association of Australia (KIAA)
Lachlan Gall, Pastoralists Association of West Darling (PAWD)
Dr Tony English, Australian Veterinary Association
David O'Shannessy, (RSPCA NSW)
Patrick Medway, Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Inc (WPSA)
Greg Markwick, Department of Primary Industries (DPI)
Steve McLeod, Australasian Wildlife Management Society (AWMS)
Ray Borda, Kangaroo Industries Association of Australia (KIAA)

Adoption of Minutes of Meeting # 22

The minutes were ratified. Moved Greg Bates. Seconded David O'Shannessy

Adoption of Agenda of Meeting # 23

Proposal of a new Commercial Zone in the Holbrook Area – Ray Scott

Item 1. Review of actions from meeting #22

Action 1: Stephen Wolter will call his equivalent in Victoria and find out what exactly is happening with the proposed cull beginning 31 March. Information will be sent to the Panel when available.

Done. The Commonwealth is currently in talks with Victoria about a wildlife trade operations plan which is valid for a maximum of 3 years and allows the state to export for commercial purposes. If operations are successful, the State may move to a Trade Assessment plan at the end of the period.

Item 2: 2014 tag allocation and harvest update

- Allocation to date is 367,000 animals which is 15% of the quota
- This time last year allocation was at 18%
- Take is 288,000 animals – 12% of the quota
- This time last year it was at 13%
- The take is the lowest it has been for 10-20 years
- The take is so low that it has no impact on the population and it will probably remain low if no further markets are found.

Item 3: Industry Update

- **Markets (China market)**
 - Ray Borda (KIAA rep) has been to China four times this year and has been speaking to delegates from China on a weekly basis.
 - China is keen. Industry was 95% sure they would come on board, now they are only 30% sure.
 - Successful in getting Kangaroos on the Free Trade Agreement, but this doesn't actually give access to markets.
 - Other Australian exporters are worried about the Hygiene and animal welfare issues associated with the Kangaroo Industry. They are concerned that if something were to go wrong it would affect other areas of trade.
 - The Australian Government has failed badly with bringing the Australian staff in Beijing up to date with the improvements made by the Kangaroo Industry with regards to Hygiene and the improvements in animal welfare. The Government can help in the perception of kangaroo meat by not referring to kangaroos as a pest but as a renewable resource.
 - There is still hope for a China market.
 - Macro Meats are thinking of opening an Office in China to educate people in eating and cooking Kangaroo.

- **Other issues from Industry Reps?**
 - What hope has Industry got of surviving if the 'take' continues to be low ?
 - Ray Borda responded by saying industry will die a slow death. Compliance and red tape are eating all the profits. Industry has not had a price increase in three years but Supermarkets have put the price of the Kangaroo meat on the shelves up three times. Kangaroo meat is overpriced in the Supermarkets and they tend to push other meats. All meats are under pressure but the Kangaroo Industry feels it more because it is so small.
 - The Pet Meat market is on the decline and Human Consumption markets are flat.
 - Russia? Don't know if or when this market will open again.
 - India? India at present has a high rate of diabetes and obesity problems. They can't take cattle so Industry is trying to open doors there for low fat Kangaroo meat.
 - The California Clause has once again come up for extension – this has taken longer than expected but should be closed within the next three months.
 - The worth of the Kangaroo Industry is around \$150 to \$200 million.
 - The skin market is not very strong. This took a hit around three year ago and hasn't recovered. Synthetics are a huge problem for the Kangaroo Skin trade. Kangaroo skin is of much higher quality but synthetics are much cheaper and easier to use.
 - Animal Rights groups and Social Media are a powerful tool in the fight against harvesting Kangaroos. If the Commercial harvest ceased to exist the results for the kangaroo population could be very serious. If Industry weren't there to decrease the numbers, what do people think will happen to the kangaroos?
 - Industry needs a patron. Someone to step up and defend the cause. Need to be proactive at defending the cause.
 - Industry is always looking at new ways to improve. Some projects underway at the moment are:
 - 1. Harvester vehicles with chillers on the back. Carcasses hanging from the back of a truck is not a good image.
 - 2. Macro Meats are developing a System they are hoping all Industry will adopt. This is a yearly on-line assessment for Harvesters.

Hygiene and ethical questions will be included. This was triggered by Steve McLeod.

Item 4: Review of Program

- **Survey of landholders and harvesters**

- The Program is currently being reviewed to find ways to reduce red tape and costs and to find efficiencies in the delivery of the Program.
- Landholders and Harvesters have been surveyed by OEH and Brad Purcell (OEH – Project Officer) took the Panel through the results of the Review to date.
- The survey is in early stages of comparisons.
- The biggest problems recognised so far are “Property specific tags” and the Landholders misconceptions around Quota.
- The next stage of the survey is to break it down into ‘for and against’ opinions.
- Any changes to licences will be put forward as a recommendation by OEH to the Minister by mid-December.
- A copy of the Summary can then be sent to the Panel.
- No changes will be made to the Program in 2015.
- Any changes will be made in time for the Review process to feed into the new Plan which commences 2016.
- There will be the opportunity to bring the Review back before this Panel another two times when we meet in March and November 2015.
- Compliance will be the next component to be reviewed. The Panel will be involved in this.

- **Joint discussion on results**

- “Scanning and barcoding of tags” was mentioned as one way to reduce red tape.
- The Harvesters Association felt that this would increase the amount of work in the field for the Harvester. Scanning and barcoding would actually increase red tape and make the Harvester’s job harder. The Harvester’s Association was surprised that OEH had received so much co-operation from the Harvesters with their survey. Current Harvesters feel that the only thing OEH is interested in is pursuing ways to catch them in illegal activities.
- There were also strong views in the survey to lift the cap on Fauna Dealer licences. This view came from both Harvesters and Landowners.
- It was strongly felt within the Panel that this was because of the misconception that this would make the Industry stronger, that there were markets out there which current Fauna Dealers were not pursuing. There may be room in the Industry for smaller operators, but this would ruin the perception of the products.
- Current Fauna Dealers have indicated they would pursue legal action if the cap were to be lifted.
- OEH are revisiting a document prepared for Kangaroo Management in 2003 called “Review of Kangaroo Fauna Dealer Licensing in NSW”. This document suggests the phasing in of licences starting with the sub-licences.
- OEH may go through this process and not make any changes at all – final decision will be with the Minister.

Item 5: Draft Quota Report for 2015

- **Population and quotas – survey results**
 - This report is still in Draft form and needs to be to the Commonwealth by the 30 November for approval
 - The quota for 2015 will be around 2,700,000 kangaroos. The quota for 2014 was 2,400,000.
 - There has been a 2 million increase in population since the 2013 counts.
 - Carcase weights have stayed stable, but if conditions remain dry this could change.
 - Greys in Tibooburra have fallen below the thresholds introduced by the AAT so will be culled at 10% of the population in 2015.

Action 1: Stephen will email the draft Quota Report to the Panel members this afternoon. Any comments need to be back to OEH by COB 24 November 2014. This document is draft only and not yet a public document.

Comments:

- Ray Majdwech has obtained the aerial survey raw data sheets from Kangaroo Management via Gipa Act request and is using this information to suggest we are only counting kangaroos in national parks and extrapolating this information across the harvesting areas.. He is attempting to prove Kangaroos are in decline.
- Next time this happens Industry has asked whether OEH can let members know so they can have the opportunity to respond to any negative media. Industry stated that Ray Majdwech is entitled to do all the research he wants, but should not be going public with incorrect information.
- High quotas with low takes are technically a good thing. The perception is a small take is good for sustainability. This year's historically low take from a business point of view, is good, but not so good for the Farmers.
- What happens in the next drought when the population dips? There is so much tolerance in the quota at the moment that this will not be as crucial.

Item 6: Updates

- **Compliance issues**
 - We currently have no Compliance staff attached to the Kangaroo Management Program and the performance indicator of four chiller inspections per year is not being met. After discussions with the Commonwealth, KMS has employed a full-time staff member to travel around the State inspecting premises in order to try to meet this expectation.
 - The Review of the program will look for efficiencies and will concentrate on more risk based compliance. Compliance will be based around where the most activity is occurring.
 - Findings from the Compliance review will be looked at early next year and brought back to the Panel for comment.

- KIAA suggested that we could cut essential compliance in half by focusing our investigations at the Processing Plant instead of the field chillers. This way all carcasses could be checked as they come off of the truck. OEH could also check Company Audits which are carried out at the processing works daily. This would be more efficient and less costly.
- The only short coming to this is OEH has no jurisdiction in other States for those Fauna Dealers who export directly to SA and Qld
- The Harvester Association raised a few points:
 1. Why are the shooters being targeted for underweight kangaroos when this weight restriction was introduced by the Fauna Dealers and in no way affects the Program?
 2. Do chiller Managers need to give Compliance a key to their chiller or can it be that the officer call the Manager when they arrive at the chiller.

Action 2: Stephen will take this up with Compliance and get back to the Harvesters Association

3. Why is a Fauna Dealer targeted when his Manager carries on illegal activity at his chiller, but a property owner is not responsible for a S121 when this licence is issued to the property owner? Both these licences come under the same legislation in the Act.
 - OEH will look at this in the changes to the program. We will review the process of legal action and compliance.
 - The change to Fauna Dealer or Manager being responsible for any breaches at a licenced Premise would probably require some change to Legislation.
 - The S121 however, cannot be compared as when the property owner signs the form for a person with a S123 to cull on his property, the person with the S123 then has a conditional licence and takes full responsibility.
 - The S121 may be one licence that is removed in the Review. Tags would then not be property specific and Harvesters would be able to shoot on any property as long as the property owners have given their permission. OEH would do aerial surveys by zone and tags would be shot by zone.
 - Most illegal activity complaints are generated by the public. Reports of non-compliance are sent to the Compliance Unit for investigation. Kangaroo related complaints are reported to the Kangaroo Management Section.
 - The Compliance staff have not been trained in kangaroo based compliance.
 - The Panel asked if someone from the Compliance Unit could give a presentation at the next meeting.

Action 3: Stephen will ask Arthur Snook (Team Leader Compliance) to the next meeting.

- The Panel also asked if a Non-Commercial representative could come to the meeting. They feel that if Industry continues to take low cull numbers as it is doing at the moment, the indiscriminate killing of kangaroo will affect the roo population.
- Kangaroo Management try to remove itself from the Non-commercial cull. We only deal with the regulatory side of the Commercial program and ensure that the cull is sustainable.

- **Meeting with Commonwealth (COP review)**

- The Commonwealth have called a meeting in December for all State Kangaroo Management Plan Managers re a review of the Code of Practice.
 - Previous Code of Practice reviews have included other stake holders.
 - KIAA have requested that Stephen Wolter let the Commonwealth know that Industry needs to be involved in the Code of Practice review.
- **Extension of KMAP**
 - Until the review of the Program is completed OEH would like to extend the current Kangaroo Management Advisory Panel for another 12 months. OEH will send letters out to this affect, if anyone does not want to continue could they advise who they would like from their Group to come in their place.

Item 7: Other Business

- **Matters raised by members**
 - The NSW Farmers Association has had a call from a Land Owner in the Holbrook Area. The Land Owner would like this area to be considered as a Commercial Zone because of the large numbers of kangaroos on his property.
 - The costs to survey for a new zone are very high and with the low demand for the product at the moment, this would not be viable.
 - Could OEH just expand the SENSW zone to include the Holbrook Area?
 - The area would still need to be surveyed, but maybe this could be done in time for the 2016 Plan
- **Research**
 - WPSA still have money available toward a scholarship.
 - WPSA does not need OEH or the Panel's approval to push this scholarship.
 - A further suggestion was:
 1. The worth of Industry to Society ie. Road accidents (damages). Is it worth having an Industry?

List of Actions:

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Action 2: Stephen will take this up with Compliance and get back to the Harvesters Association

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