

Attachment 1

**Annual Report on Licences issued under the
DECC Policy and Procedural Guidelines for the
Mitigation of Commercial Crop Damage by Flying-foxes for the 2006/07
Fruit Growing Season**

November 2007

Attachment 1

Published by:

Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW

59-61 Goulburn Street, Sydney

PO Box A290, Sydney South 1232

Phone: (02) 9995 5000 (switchboard)

Phone: 131 555 (environment information and publications requests)

Phone: 1300 361 967 (national parks information and publications requests)

Fax: (02) 9995 5999

TTY: (02) 9211 4723

Email: info@environment.nsw.gov.au

Web: www.environment.nsw.gov.au

ISSN 1835-9868

DECC 2008/315

Executive Summary and Recommendations

The following is a state-wide summary of licensed activity in 2006/07 under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and the 'DECC Policy and Procedures for the Mitigation of Commercial Crop Damage by Flying-Foxes'.

- The NSW allocation of the national cull limit was 3,040 Grey Headed Flying-foxes (GHFF) harmed. The DECC allocated 2,432 (80% of quota) to the PWD Regions at the start of the season.
- Licences were issued to 32 different fruit farmers, with an additional 2 variations to existing licences held by a grower in Sydney South Region. These licences authorised harm to 1155 Grey-headed Flying-foxes (GHFF), which represents 38% of the NSW quota.
- The majority of licences were issued in the Sydney North, Blue Mountains Region and Sydney South Regions.
- Several regions did not issue any licences (Northern Rivers, North Coast, Mid North Coast, Northern Tablelands, Hunter, and South Coast).
- Flying Fox Record Sheets (FFRS's) were returned for 84% (28) of the 32 licences (including variations).
- The numbers of GHFF actually harmed, estimated from Flying Fox return Sheets is 801 animals or 26% of the NSW cull limit.

It is recommended that:

1. The national quota for the 2007/08 growing season remain at 3,040 GHFF for NSW as agreed by the National Flying-fox Working Group. 80 % of this limit (2,432 GHFF) will be distributed across NSW Regions.
2. DECC publish information reminding commercial growers of their statutory obligations with respect to shooting flying foxes. This is a recommendation of the NSW Flying Fox Consultative Committee and has been implemented for the 2007-08 season.
3. DECC Wildlife Licensing and Management Unit provide a summary protocol of the DECC policy to officers who issue licenses to cull flying foxes. This is a recommendation of the NSW Flying Fox Consultative Committee and has been implemented for the 2007-08 season.
4. A thorough review of the policy is commenced in early 2008 in preparation for the proposed cessation of the national quota system.
5. DECC continue to support research priorities agreed by the NSW Flying-fox Consultative Committee, particularly those commencing over the next 12 months.

1 Introduction

The term 'flying-fox' in this report will refer to all three species of *Pteropus* found in NSW (the black, grey-headed and little red flying-fox), although all licensing data for 2006-07 is relevant to only the threatened Grey-headed flying fox.

The Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC), has had a policy in place since 1998 with respect to mitigating the damage caused by flying foxes to commercial fruit crops. This policy advocates full exclusion netting as the only reliable method for protecting fruit crops, but also made provision for the issue of licences under the National Parks and Wildlife Act to permit fruit growers to harm flying foxes.

Grey headed flying foxes were listed by both the NSW Scientific Committee and the Commonwealth Government as a threatened species in 2001. Since that time a national working group coordinated and chaired by the Department of Environment and Water Resources (DEWR) has set a national limit on the number of animals that can be culled. Under this system, NSW has a national cull limit of 3040 Grey-headed flying fox's per year (0.95% of the minimum population estimate). The Commonwealth Government have advised the states that the national approach will cease at the end of the 2007-08 season.

Flying fox management in NSW is overseen by the NSW Flying fox Consultative Committee (FFCC) which comprises government, non-government, industry, science and conservation members of the community. The FFCC has input into NSW policy with respect to licensing and recovery planning for flying foxes. The licensing program for flying foxes is currently coordinated centrally by the DECC Parks and Wildlife Group Wildlife Licensing and Management Unit (WLMU) and administered by the local Area Office. Recovery planning for the department is coordinated by the DECC Conservation, Landscapes and Policy Group.

An annual report on licence applications and licences issued has been prepared by the WLMU each year since 2001. This report includes a summary of data and an analysis of trends and comparison with previous years and is made available to stakeholders and the public via the DECC internet site.

2. Licenses issued for 2006-07

A breakdown of the number of licenses issued for the 2006-2007 growing season is provided in Table 1. The data shows that all of the licenses issued were from DECC Central Branch offices, with the majority from Sydney North and Sydney South Regions. Approximately 37% of the quota i.e. 1155 animals allocated to NSW were issued to licensees in 2006-2007 and 801 animals reported killed from returned Flying Fox Return Sheets (26% of the quota).

3. Licensing trends since 2001-2007

Examination of the licensing data shows a reduction in both the number of licences issued and the number of animals allocated from the previous season. Overall there has been a substantial reduction of 50% in the numbers of animals allocated to licensees since the 2003/04.

However, DECC Regions such as Sydney South have experienced either a consistent trend in licensing or a general increase in the number of licensees and number of animals licensed to be harmed. This may be due to the fact since 2000, greater numbers of flying foxes are residing in the Sydney Basin area of winter.

The overall decline in licensing since 2003/04 is possibly due to a greater abundance of native food resources for the animals. This can be corroborated by evidence that the reproductive output of flying foxes over the last few seasons has been stable. There may also be a change in attitude of some growers toward the effectiveness of shooting, or that some growers are choosing not to acquire a licence.

4. Compliance and Enforcement

The number of investigations and compliance checks undertaken by the DECC were limited due to resource constraints. No legal action relating to the licensing of flying-foxes was taken against any licensed grower or other member of the public this season.

In preparation for the 2007-08 season, the DECC has published reminder notices in a number of industry magazines informing growers of their statutory obligations with respect to licenses to shoot flying foxes.

5. Research and Future Issues

A list of research projects into grey-headed flying foxes that is either sponsored, or undertaken by DECC officers is provided below. A number of these projects have received Commonwealth Natural Heritage Trust Funding.

- Grey-headed Flying-foxes in Orchards Project (NHT funded) - DPI Project Officer and DECC Project Officer appointed. Project commenced early in the growing season of 2007. Field data being collected for 2007-08 season. Project is funded until June 2008 (though additional funds will be sought to extend the project).
- Grey-headed Flying-fox foraging and habitat mapping project (funded by Commonwealth and DECC) – Dr Peggy Eby and Dr Brad Law (SF NSW) – project very close to completion.
- Investigation of microclimate at flying-fox roosts sites undertaken by Stephanie Snoyman at Macquarie University.
- Flying-fox camp database (DECC-funded) – Original NSW database on known GHFF and Black FF roost sites updated, and expanded to include (where possible) known GHFF camps in Qld and Vic (to make it a national database)-project completed by Dr Peggy Eby.

The DECC is also currently completing a draft national recovery plan for the Grey-headed flying fox.

The Commonwealth DEWR has indicated that 2007/08 will be the last year of the national quota system. If this occurs, it may necessitate a significantly changed approach by the DECC and by growers in the 2008/2009 season.

Table 1: Summary of licensing data for the 2006-2007 growing season

PWG Branch Name	Region	Allocation of cull limits at start of 2006/07 Season*	Number of licences issued	Total number GHFF licensed to be harmed	Number FFRS returned	Reported Number GHFF harmed**
Northern	Northern Rivers	25	0	0	-	-
	North Coast	25	0	0	-	-
	Hunter/Mid-North Coast	25	0	0	-	-
Central	Central Coast Hunter Range	371	3	150	3	94
	Sydney North	936	11	300	10	185
	Sydney	25	1	Unknown	1	0
	Sydney South	900	9 + 2 variations	630	9	497
	Blue Mountains	100	8	75	5	25
Southern	South Coast	25	0	0	-	-
TOTAL		2,432	32+ 2 variations	1155 = 38 % of NSW quota	28	801 = 26% of NSW quota

Table 2: Trends in flying fox licensing since 2001/02 showing the number of licences issued each season with the number of animals identified in brackets.

PWD Branch	Region	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Northern	Northern Rivers	5 (250)	5 (205)	2 (15)	1 (12)	0	0
	North Coast	1 (10)	0	0	0	0	0
	Hunter	0	0	1 (30)	0	0	0
	Northern Tablelands	2 (55)	0	0	0	0	0
Central							
	Central Coast Hunter Range	10 (616)	11 (900)	12 (923)	3 (150)	4 (200)	3 (150)
	Sydney North	22 (590)	26 (828)	25 (850)	13 (435)	16 (535)	11 (300)
	Sydney	1 (21)	1 (35)	1 (20)	0	0	1 (?)
	Sydney South	4 (155)	9 (380)	7 (389)	6 (195)	18 (555)	9 (630)
	Blue Mountains	7 (115)	9 (107)	6 (121)	4 (60)	3 (30)	8 (75)
Southern	South Coast	1 (20)	1 (20)	1 (20)	0	0	0
TOTAL		54 (1852)	62 (2358)	53 (2331)	27 (852)	41 (1320)	32 (1155)