

Best practice pest animal management

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Introduction

Over the last decade, the approach to managing pest animals has changed. Rather than trying to kill as many pests as possible, it is now realised that, like most other aspects of agriculture, pest management needs to be carefully planned and coordinated. Pest animal control is just one aspect of an integrated approach to the management of production and natural resource systems. Ideally, pest animal management needs to be set within broader Regional and Local Management Plans.

Most pests are highly mobile and can readily replace those that are killed in control programs. Unless actions are well planned and coordinated across a broad area, individual control programs are unlikely to have a lasting effect.

When planning pest management, there are some important steps that should be considered.

1. The trigger

What is the pressure or trigger to undertake pest animal management? For example, is there strong community or political pressure for action on pests, and an expectation that pest animals should be controlled? Pest control is unlikely to be effective unless there is strong local community or political will to take action and commit the necessary resources.

2. Responsibility

Who is the key group to take responsibility for bringing together those individuals and groups that have a key interest in dealing with the pest issue? These are usually the relevant Rural Lands

Protection Board (RLPB) but in some areas it might be the local Landcare or catchment management committee.

3. Determine the problem

What is the problem? In the past the pest was usually seen as the problem. Hence the solution was to kill as many pests as possible. We now know that the situation is more complex. It is best to first determine what the problem is. It may be reduced lambing percentage, fence damage, reduced crop yields, complaints from neighbours or emotional stress from worrying about the next attack. Several factors impact on each of these problems and control of pests is often only part of the solution. The following questions help define the problem:

- Who has the problem?
- Where is the problem?
- How severe is the problem?
- Will the problem change with time?

4. Area of concern

Identify and describe the area of concern. It sometimes helps to remove agency and property boundaries so that the problem can be viewed without complications from a tendency to point blame at individuals, groups or agencies. Property and agency boundaries can be added later once the best approach has been agreed to.

Also, it often helps to break the area into smaller management units for planning. Trying to deal with the complexity of a very large area can be daunting. These smaller units may be determined by water bodies, mountain ranges, fences, vegetation that is unsuitable for a particular pest or other suitable boundaries that managers can work to.

While it is best to work to boundaries that restrict the movement of pests, this may not be practicable and jurisdictional boundaries, for example, the border of an RLPB or that of a Landcare group,



may have to be used in combination with physical boundaries.

5. Gather all information

Gather and assess other relevant planning documents such as Catchment Management Plans, Recovery Plans for threatened species and Property Management Plans.

- Identify, as best you can, the pest animal distribution and abundance in each management unit.
- Determine what the pest management plan is meant to achieve in terms of reduced damage.
- Estimate, as far as is practicable, the damage caused by the pest or pests to production and to the environment.
- Who has the problem and where is it? In other words, who is the plan for?
- Identify any key constraints that may prevent the plan being put into operation.
- Identify all the key stakeholders.

6. Develop the plans

Develop pest management plans for each of the management units. This involves:

- **Defining management objectives.** Objectives are a statement of what is to be achieved, defined in terms of desired outcomes, usually conservation or economic benefits. Objectives should state what will be achieved where, by when and by whom.
- **Selecting management options.** The management option is selected that will most effectively and efficiently meet the management objectives. The options include: local eradication, containment, sustained management, targeted management, one-off action and taking no action.
- **Developing the management strategy.** This defines the actions that will be undertaken: who will do what, when, how and where. It describes how the selected pest management options and techniques will be integrated and implemented to achieve the management objectives.
- **Monitoring the success of the program against the stated objectives.** Monitoring has two components: operational monitoring and performance monitoring. **Operational monitoring** determines what was done, when, and at what cost – this determines the efficiency of the program. **Performance monitoring** determines whether the objectives of the plan were achieved and, if not, why not – i.e. the effectiveness of the program. When developing and implementing a monitoring strategy:

- Be very clear about what needs to be monitored and why.
- Keep it as simple as possible and compatible with other regular management practices.
- Make the process quick and easy.
- Provide regular feedback to key persons and groups using an appropriate format.
- Display or disseminate the results in a public place.

Further Reading

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