

Western Region

Kangaroo Management Workshop

Executive summary

The Cobar Kangaroo Management Workshop was an initiative of the Western Lands Advisory Council (WLAC) with support from Local Land Services Western Region.

The workshop was very successful, with a strong step made towards achieving the overall aim of developing an informed and collaborative approach to kangaroo management in Western NSW



Rationale

Currently, unsustainably high kangaroo populations in areas of the Western Division are leading to increasing pressure on rangeland ecosystems and pastoral enterprises, with subsequent negative impacts on rural communities.

These high population numbers also create a potentially serious animal welfare issue of mass deaths during the next onset of dry times from starvation, thirst, disease and roadkill.

WLAC recognised the need to do something about the situation and decided to bring together pastoralists, support agencies, commercial industry representatives, policy makers, regulatory bodies and animal welfare organisations, with the goal of developing a more collaborative and effective way of addressing the issues.

With this goal in mind, WLAC approached Local Land Services Western Region with the concept of inviting key stakeholders to a discussion forum in order to investigate what the current situation was, what could be done and how the various stakeholders could work better together to achieve positive outcomes.

Forty-two people attended the workshop, representing nineteen different organisations. Ten of the attendees were landholders from the Western Division.

Practical and acceptable kangaroo management is a long-standing and on-going issue, and it is clear that change is not going to happen overnight. It was recognised from the beginning that this workshop would be the start of a longer-term collaborative process, involving a wider cross-section of the Western Division community.

It is the intention of WLAC and Local Land Services Western Region to continue this process of working together and involving a wider scope of stakeholders in the future to contribute to the discussions, fostering effective short and long term solutions.

Executive summary

Points of agreement

1. Red, western grey and eastern grey kangaroos as well as euros are currently in unsustainably high numbers across the Western Division.
2. Decisions, policies and strategies must be evidence and experience-based (not philosophically-based).
3. We need and must support a strong and expanding commercial harvest industry.
4. We must aspire to an increased value for kangaroo meat.
5. We acknowledge that neither commercial harvest nor non-commercial take will have any effective impact on population control, at least in the foreseeable future.
6. Maintaining animal welfare standards and ensuring best-practice is implemented is paramount.
7. Given the current population peak, we anticipate a huge kangaroo welfare issue is looming with the onset of the next long dry (drought) period across the Western Division. Previously, the transition to drought has involved rapid declines in numbers as kangaroos suffer natural deaths from starvation and or thirst. The numbers to die with change of seasons are expected to far exceed any currently shot through harvesting and damage mitigation strategies.
8. While we are not proud of this anticipated outcome, we take no responsibility for it. We would prefer Government policies and community support to allow for managed preventative intervention strategies.
9. We acknowledge the welfare concerns for immature kangaroos of any strategies or actions which result in the death of breeding aged females, whether naturally or through any human intervention.
10. There is a unique situation applicable within the pastoral zone regarding the impacts for grazing pressure caused by kangaroos on two other natural resources, namely native vegetation and water. Uncontrolled overgrazing can result in significant environmental harm to these biodiversity assets.
11. Management intervention strategies using fencing to partially or fully exclude kangaroos from watering points, part property or whole property boundaries or clusters of properties may have beneficial outcomes in certain circumstances and locations, but these options are not universally applicable.

Outcomes

The workshop outcomes have been a positive step forward and create momentum and motivation for further collaboration and action into the future.

Actions generated from the workshop were as follows:

Working groups and forums

1. Report to the WLAC on workshop outcomes.
2. Convene a "Policy Input into Reforms" Working Group.
3. Create an Independent panel to advise government on Kangaroo Industry.
4. Hold an Indigenous Kangaroo Forum.

Promotions and marketing

5. Develop a promotions program to improve public perceptions and relations.
6. Establishment of a marketing campaign to help access 'new audiences'.
7. Develop new markets for kangaroo products.

Legislation and licensing

8. Investigate options for inter-agency management to meet "special circumstance conditions" for kangaroo management.
9. Increase the number of wholesale licences for commercial harvesting.

Management options

10. Develop and define an economic analysis tool (calculator) for fencing options.
11. Implement alternative kangaroo management options and techniques.

Future action

The WLAC and Local Land Services Western Region are committed to taking the momentum that has been created from this workshop, ensuring that actions are completed and a wider range of stakeholders informed.

The focus for the future is:

- Working together to solve the issues.
- Educating the wider public about what is going on.
- The provision of good science to back-up decisions.
- Promote methods and create support systems for landholders to manage the issue of kangaroo management in the short and longer term.