

3 March 2021

Dr. Heather Channon
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Via email: planfeedback@feralpigs.com.au

WoolProducers Australia submission for the draft National Feral Pig Action Plan: 2021-2031

Dear Dr Channon,

WoolProducers Australia (WoolProducers) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission relating to the draft *National Feral Pig Action Plan: 2021-2031*, hereafter referred to as 'the plan'. As the peak industry body representing Australia's 60,000 woolgrowers, who generate an average \$3.5 billion in exports each year, our submission is focussed on ensuring the needs of the wool industry are a key focus of the plan. Our membership is comprised of the industry's commercial, superfine and stud breeding sectors. WoolProducers is nationally representative through our State Farming Organisation members and three democratically elected Independent Directors. Our policy areas include animal health and welfare, biosecurity, sustainability, pest management control, natural resource management, drought policy, emergency animal disease outbreak preparedness, trade and market access, and industry development including research, development, and extension. Almost all of these policy areas intersect at some point with the vision and objectives of the plan.

While WoolProducers have only had the opportunity to attend two NFPAP Steering Committee (the steering committee) meetings given the delayed invitation to participate in this forum, WoolProducers looks forward to future opportunities to contribute to the success of the plan.

Following consultation with WoolProducers' members, I am pleased to offer our broad endorsement of the draft plan, however I wanted to take this opportunity to raise several areas of key concern.

Conflicting stakeholder priorities and expectations

As raised through WoolProducers' participation in the steering committee, an ongoing challenge will be managing the work of the plan in accordance with varying priorities and expectations of stakeholders. Other successful vertebrate pest control programmes, such as the WoolProducers led National Wild Dog Action Plan have focused on minimising pest impacts that manifest in the form of a single negative impact, i.e. predation. Given the wide and varying nature of impacts that feral pigs have on environmental, agricultural, cultural and social assets there will be varying expectations of what success looks like based on stakeholders' individual needs.

There will be an ever-present risk that stakeholders will withdraw or redirect their support of work being undertaken under the plan as their individual expectations are met or are not met. With the law of diminishing returns, particularly in relation to pest eradication programmes, there will place an ever-increasing burden on remaining resources available to achieve residual targets of projects.

Challenges will also exist with regards to the structure of the National Feral Pig Action Plan Implementation Committee (the Implementation Committee) and the proposed presence of just two government representatives. Given the significant contributions that government makes to vertebrate pest control programmes it is likely that many of the jurisdictions will want direct oversight of the planning and implementation activities by way of a seat at the table.

Appreciating the desire not to have too many stakeholders at the Implementation Committee table, WoolProducers feels that it may be warranted for the NFPAP to consider establishing sub-committees of each of the 5 stakeholder groups identified in the proposed Implementation Committee structure and providing the necessary secretariat support to each of these groups.

Data management

WoolProducers appreciates the need to have an efficient data management platform to facilitate stakeholder engagement, ease of access to data and information and to provide consistency in data capture and analysis. While there may be an absence of a fit for purpose product that achieves all desired outcomes at this point in time WoolProducers encourages the National Feral Pig Management Coordinator (the Management Coordinator) and the Implementation Committee to assess the potential to enhance existing products in order to meet the business needs of the plan (one such example being FeralPigScan). If such assessments identify that the platforms are not fit for purpose, and cannot be enhanced to be so, there will (at the very least) be valuable lessons learnt that can assist in developing a bespoke platform.

Goals, Objectives and Actions (Section 3)

Having assessed the goals, objectives and actions outlined in the plan WoolProducers has the following comments with respect to referenced sections:

Action 1.2.1 Ensure strategic, adaptive and humane feral pest management at a community, regional and national level - performance measures a. and b.

Recognising that there may be consolidation of vertebrate pest control plans, consideration should be given as to whether % of plans / groups would be a better metric as opposed to the absolute number of plans / groups.

Action 1.2.2 Collaborate with partners to improve coordination, decision making, and reporting of adaptive approaches, actions, and outcomes - performance measure a. – Number of jurisdictions and management groups collecting and sharing data through NFPAP IC according to agreed measures.

This data reporting should not be undertaken through the Implementation Committee. Reporting should be undertaken in direct collaboration between regional coordinators, the Management Coordinator and the Support Officer using an appropriate data management platform (see above). Consolidated reports are then shared with the Implementation Committee.

Action 2.2.1 Implement nationally recognised and accredited training programs for feral pig best practice management.

Efforts to educate land managers must not be limited to auditable and certifiable qualifications. There are many instances in the agricultural space where effective extension has been undertaken by means other than formal training activities. The focus of formal training activities should be upon a “train the trainer” type approach that is focused, in the first instance, on regional coordinators.

Action 3.1.3 Develop research, development and extension (RD&E) opportunities to inform action.

Too often the agriculture sector has seen RD&E projects undertaken that deliver relatively little return on investment in relation to other investment opportunities. As a matter of good governance, the efforts undertaken in identifying RD&E opportunities must be undertaken as a collaboration between the Implementation Committee, Management Coordinator, Support Officer and regional coordinators. Failure to undertake this collaborative approach will likely result in a RD&E centric arm of the project that may not maximise returns on the finite resources available to undertake the activities of the plan.

Again, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to lodge a submission on the draft National Feral Pig Action Plan and would welcome further consultation as the finalisation and implementation of the plan progresses.

Please do not hesitate to contact Mr Adam Dawes, General Manager on 0455 442 776 should you wish to discuss any issues raised in this submission.

Yours Sincerely,



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