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Fighting pest animals and weeds

Helping farmers fight the threat of pest animals and weeds will reduce production costs, reduce environmental impacts and protect the natural resource base for everyone

Pest animals and weeds have a real impact on farmers' profits and productivity. In 2009 pest animals were estimated to cost Australia \$620.8 million a year in production losses. Weeds cost Australian farmers around \$1.5 billion a year to control.

Helping farmers fight pest animals and weeds benefits us all. It protects agricultural production and our environment. Pest and weed management is a shared responsibility between industry, local governments, State and Territory governments and the Commonwealth Government.

Managing established pests and weeds

On-ground mitigation is best led by industry and the community. There is little value in one farmer managing the weeds and pests on their farm if neighbouring farms and other

land-holders don't do the same thing. Other land-holders include private owners, lease holders, indigenous people and governments.

Collective action is needed to deal with a collective threat.

The Government is investing **\$50 million over four years** (starting 1 July 2015) to improve the way pest (including feral) animals and weeds are managed.

This funding will be used to:

- research, develop and promote awareness of new technologies and tools for pest control (including chemical and biological control options);
- give land-holders and communities useful information about the benefits of pest animal and weed control and the cost of in-action;
- promote community action to build on-ground mitigation capability and skills of land-holders (e.g. demonstration sites); and
- through consultation, update identified priority weeds and develop a list of priority pest animals (including feral animals) for joint government, community and industry action.

Scientists waging war on rabbits

The new funding on pest animals and weeds will help develop new, more cost-effective or humane technologies for managing the impacts of pest animals and weeds. Bio-control is one type of research this funding can support.

Rabbits cost Australian agriculture \$206 million in production losses each year. The effectiveness of the existing biological controls calici virus (also known as Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease) and myxomatosis have diminished with time.

Scientists from the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre, have identified a new virulent strain of calici virus as a control agent. The Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority is currently assessing the strain for possible release.

Emergency response

Preventing or stamping out new and emerging threats is far easier and more cost effective than managing a pest, weed or disease that has established and spread.

The Government is investing **\$50 million over four years** (starting 1 July 2015) to respond rapidly and effectively to eradicate potentially devastating pests, weeds and diseases.

As part of this new funding we have established the **Immediate Assistance Fund** to deliver national and international experts and equipment on the ground as soon as possible.

Better and faster management and emergency response to newly introduced pests and diseases can:

- increase the chances of complete eradication;
- minimise the size and cost of the response needed; and
- limit any negative impact on Australian exports.

If you suspect an exotic pest or disease incursion on your farm, the Australian Government will be better placed to assist. We will provide rapid response to the incursion and work with affected industry groups and State and Territory governments on a potential national eradication program.

Who to contact

Early intervention is vital in a pest or disease outbreak. In the event of an emergency incursion, contact either Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881 or the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888. If the incursion relates to an import, call 1800 798 636. If it relates to an established pest or weed, contact your relevant State or Territory agency.

Note: Pest, weed and disease incursions are closely linked to a sound biosecurity system. For information on what the White Paper is delivering for biosecurity see Fact Sheet—*A stronger biosecurity system*.

Further Information

- agwhitepaper.agriculture.gov.au