

July 2019

To all land owners in the Shire of Ravensthorpe

RE: ANNUAL UPDATE

This letter provides an overview of some of the key activities that Southern Biosecurity Group (SBG) has carried out since 1 July 2018.

Through funding from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, SBG has carried out 46 hectares of prickly pear control in the Oldfield Catchment. The Drooping Prickly Pear, like all prickly pears, takes over where ever it occurs forming dense patches. The sharp spines cause problems for stock, native animals and bushwalkers alike. It also provides habitat for fruit fly. We are currently seeking additional funds to continue to expand the area of cactus control. There is a real opportunity to potentially eradicate this species from the shire.

Wild dog control has remained a key activity of the group. Over 3000 baits have been distributed and 11 dogs trapped and humanely destroyed. Two wild dogs were captured and destroyed only 16 kilometres from Ravensthorpe townsite. Work carried out in Queensland has shown that the average range of an adult wild dog is between 10 and 30 kilometres. Six foxes were also destroyed after being caught in traps.

Rabbits have recently been identified as the most destructive invasive species in Australia, impacting over 300 threatened species across the country. In November we released the RDHV1-K5 (also known as calici) rabbit virus at 17 sites across the region including Hopetoun, Ravensthorpe and Munglinup. This has been very effective, with an absence of rabbits reported in some of the release locations. Due to the dry conditions though, there hasn't been a huge spread of the disease between populations. Another release of the disease will take place in spring. If you have a site you would like included, please contact the executive officer to register your interests.

Foxes are another key target species for the group. Through a partnership with the Hopetoun Clay Target Club we helped to deliver a community fox shoot. In total, 76 foxes, 19 rabbits and 2 feral cats were shot over the evening of 6th April. Foxes eat around 3.5 kilograms of food each week, meaning that 76 foxes are responsible for consuming over 250 kilograms of food in just one week. Their diet is varied but includes poultry, small mammals and other animals.

We provided input into the recommendation that feral cats become a species listed under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007. Now that feral cats are listed, we can now start carrying out works on this species. It is only feral cats that are listed, not domestic. SBG will be following DPIRD's policy feral cat policy to minimise the risk to domestic cats, which is available from <https://agric.wa.gov.au/n/7758>.

We have submitted two major funding applications. One was to the State NRM grants, however this was not successful. This grant would have provided additional funds to continue cactus control works. The other grant application was in partnership with the shires of Ravensthorpe and Esperance for the state barrier fence extension, which was successful.

Kangaroos are an emerging issue for the shire. Due to the dry conditions there are more animals around Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun and they are bringing ticks with them.



As part of our regular engagement program, we will be carrying out a community survey to determine what the key priority species are that we should be addressing. We strongly encourage you to contribute to these brief surveys. This is your opportunity to help form the priority species your contributions are spent on. Remember, you still have an obligation to control pests on your own land. Works done by SBG should focus on those species that don't respect property boundaries and are highly mobile and add value to everything that landholders do.

We have recently launched a website (www.southernbiosecuritygroup.org.au). The site is continually evolving with more information being added all the time. All project updates will be posted here, as will information about key pest plant and animal species.

SBG delivered its first newsletter via the RAIN e-news in early December. The purpose of these newsletters is to provide an overview of the group's activities, as well as information on key issues and species to look out for. These will also be posted on SBG website. If you're interested, you can sign up on our website.

Another source of information about the group's activities is the Community Spirit which is digital and free to subscribe to. See <https://www.ravensthorpe.crc.net.au/community-spirit.html> if you wish to subscribe. We try to include an article in most editions. Due to the large number of absentee landholders in the shire, we will continue to write a physical letter to all ratepayers at the start of every financial year.

As part of the declared pest rate Southern Biosecurity Group must develop an annual operational plan and budget. The 2019/20 plan has been developed and provided to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. A copy of the plan is available from our website. We are also in the process of compiling an annual report, this will be available from our website by the end of October.

In other news, the Shire of Ravensthorpe are supporting a CSIRO project to investigate biological control options for boxthorn. This is all laboratory based at present, but if something can be found, has the potential to make a huge difference to the large areas of boxthorn in the shire. Boxthorn acts as a harbour for invasive species such as foxes, cats and rabbits.

For more information regarding Southern Biosecurity Group and its activities, please contact our executive officer either via email (sbg.execofficer@gmail.com) or check out our website (www.southernbiosecuritygroup.org.au).

We encourage you to report pest plants and animals. Early detection is the key as it is much more cost effective to remove an unwanted species when it doesn't occupy a large area. Let's continue to work together to make our shire the best it can be.

Regards,

Kylie Fletcher
Executive Officer
on behalf of the Southern Biosecurity Group Committee

Pests and Weeds

Your environment · Your responsibility · Your legacy

