

FLY PLAGUE IN TOURISM AREAS — DUNG BEETLE BREEDING PROGRAM

440. Mr M.P. Murray to the Minister for Agriculture and Food

The plague of spring bush flies in 2008 had the effect of potentially reducing tourism to Western Australia, as well as affecting health and safety. At present there is a lack of any native breeding dung beetles that are necessary in removing the food source from the life cycle of the bush fly during spring. Therefore I ask:

- (a) what resources does the government intend to put into addressing this lack of a suitable species of dung beetle to cover the window period in spring;
- (b) will there be a fly population study undertaken to determine the severity of the problem;
- (c) will there be a study undertaken to determine the effect of this problem on the community;
- (d) will the Government undertake a breeding program of the “spring active” Mediterranean Dung Beetle species for release in WA to address this “window period” of nil Dung Beetle activity; and
- (e) what resources are currently employed to address the fly problem?

Mr D.T. REDMAN replied:

- (a) No resources are planned. An independent expert report commissioned by the Department of Agriculture and Food (the Department) notes that 2007-08 had abnormally large numbers of bush flies returning to normal in 2008-09. Spring active dung beetles have been introduced to WA previously with little impact. There is no guarantee that a new species of dung beetle to cover the spring period could be found. There is no guarantee that any such dung beetle would be effective because the condition of dung at that time of the year allows dung beetles and flies to co-exist with little impact on fly numbers.
- (b) No study is planned at this time. The Department continues to monitor and consider reports from the tourism industry and the community.
- (c) No study is planned at this time. However, the Department presented the independent expert report to tourism industry stakeholders and solicited comments in 2008.
- (d) No. The independent expert report notes that current stringent biosecurity requirements would make new introductions extremely expensive and therefore documented evidence is required to show that spring-active dung beetles are achieving control of the bush fly, even on a localised scale.
- (e) No resources have been employed to address the bush fly problem since 1995.