

# Submission to the Standing Committee Inquiring into Hunting on Public Lands

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14/3/2014

Submission to the Standing Committee Inquiring into the benefits of hunting on public lands.

The benefits to hunting and culling on public lands.

Definitions:

Hunting- A set of skills that allow the individual to locate and harvest game animals, generally done under fair chase circumstances.

Culling- Similar skills to hunting, with the aim being to remove specific animals or groups of animals, culling can differ from hunting with the use of night shooting under lights as an example.

1, Low cost to Government wishing to control feral species, and a specific control of overabundant native species.

Having hunted and culled both feral and native species for over 30 years, my experience tells me that I provide a low cost to Government in the control of animals, I absorb the costs which are substantial with no method of recouping those costs.

My experiences both individually and as a team member include the removal of several thousand fox's, many cats, goats, donkey's, horses, camels, dogs and goats on agricultural land, and as part of a Sporting Shooters Association of Australia Hunting for Conservation group I participated in setting up the skills testing of members in WA and participated in the removal of feral goats from the John Forrest and Walyunga National Parks.

Access to John Forrest and Walyunga National Parks was granted by DEC during the hottest months of year January and February as it was thought to be the safest time, with reduced numbers of tourists and visitors, I believe a better method is to apply constant pressure on these feral animals with shoots planned throughout the year.

In good seasons goats regularly produce twins, therefore if a small number are left behind and not shot until 12 months has elapsed, the numbers simply build up.

As to public safety, I have been shooting on private property for a very long time, taking note of buildings, stock, tanks etc, form the principles of safe firearm use, which is to identify your target and check the background, these principle apply no matter the location.

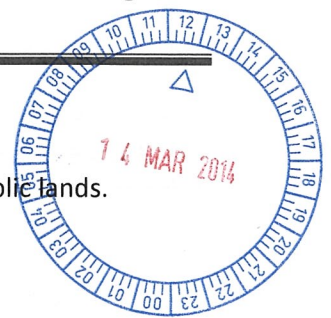
In regards to public opinion, a proper explanation of the principles of animal management, environmental management and the desired outcomes would go a long way to convincing the public of the benefits.

2, Selective removal of specific animals or species of animals both feral and native.

I am opposed to the use of any poisons in the control of animals as the flow on effect is unquantified, my own experience has shown me that many unintended animals are affected, such as insects on a dead animal being eaten by non target birds and animals.

Selective removal is more controllable and can be ceased when the KPI's are reached.

Trapping is an alternative, but I feel less useful as animals are often wary of traps from the smell left behind, trapping works well on species such as goats where water is restricted. As an example, in the



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case of goats if numbers trapped are small and therefore not a commercial viability, someone then needs to kill the animals trapped and remove them.

This raises costs, and requires the building and positioning of traps and in cases outside manmade watering points is often impossible to achieve.

3, Regenerated natural habitat occurs when feral and native species are in accord with the carrying capacity of their specific environment.

Recently I visited an area of the Goldfields on a photographic holiday that were previously commercial properties raising sheep and cattle, these properties have now been included as part of DEC plans to create a corridor of woodlands designed to foster native animal welfare and to restore the woodlands to a more natural state, such things as the removal of stock, and manmade watering points being the most obvious.

After nine days in this environment I had only encountered 4 species of birds and those were in very small numbers, saw 2 kangaroos despite extensive night travel, I frequently stopped to photograph the sights, during these times we encountered very few tracks of native animals, but still saw cat, fox, dingo and camel tracks at almost every stop.

My point being that by removing commercial species and manmade watering points from a habitat does not equate to an improved environment on the whole, the plants may regenerate but the small animals may not.

Allowing hunting/culling on these lands would help alleviate the pressure on these small animals.

4, Culturally, hunting and food gathering has been a part of my life since my childhood, rabbits, fish, fresh water crayfish, ducks quail, goats, donkeys, camels have all been on my dinner table at various times in my life.

Hunting and gathering on Public property already occurs with marron, crayfishing, spearfishing etc so why not allow it on land.

As a long term firearms owner, hunter, fisherman I can see no disadvantage to the Government, the Public or the Environment by introducing a properly managed programme of hunting and culling on Public Lands, in fact I believe quite the reverse, that the State would be advantaged by using it's already highly skilled fully equipped and willing citizens in this endeavour.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission.

Regards  
Steve Gray