

**From:**  
**To:** [Public Administration Committee](#)  
**Subject:** Submission: Contribution of Recreational Hunting Systems  
**Date:** Sunday, 19 January 2014 5:52:31 PM

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It is very encouraging that the Government has established a Committee to explore the potential benefits of licenced, controlled recreational hunting on public lands. Such programs have operated successfully in other Australian and international jurisdictions. There is also a demand by recreational hunters to be gainfully employed in such a program, appeasing their aspirations to hunt and to do something constructive for our magnificent wildlife and environment – organised and properly managed, it's a win-win. I strongly support carefully managed recreational hunting for the following reasons:

Since European settlement, introduced animals have caused significant economic damage to our agricultural industry and significant damage to our native plants and animals. In particular, introduced herbivores and introduced predators have caused widespread environmental damage including degradation of soils, vegetation and the decline and extinction of many animals, especially medium size mammals (so-called Critical Weight Range mammal up to 5 kg in weight) and some species of birds, such as night parrots and ground parrots. For example, in the arid and semi-arid zones of the state, some 90% of CWR mammals and 30% of all mammals have become extinct or have severely declined – introduced predators (foxes, feral cats) have been implicated in this alarming decline.

#### Feral herbivores:

It is widely accepted that feral herbivores including feral goats, pigs, camels, horses, donkeys and cattle in particular, cause significant and in some cases, irreversible damage to native vegetation, soils and to the habitat of native fauna. For example, there is an estimated 1 million feral camels in central Australia; about half of these are in WA.

There is ample documented scientific evidence that grazing and browsing by feral camels and goats is causing serious environmental damage (See Department of Agriculture and Food WA, Department of Parks and Wildlife WA and Pest Animal Cooperative Research Centre publications). In WA, goats are having a diabolical impact on the vegetation and environment in the Murchison-Gascoyne region in particular, and are arguably one of the greatest threats to our native vegetation in the semi arid zone. Their impacts are widespread and insidious.

#### Introduced predators

As mentioned above, foxes and feral cats are recognised as extremely serious threats to native fauna and have been scientifically shown to be the primary cause of declines and extinctions of many species of native animals. Again, publications by the above mentioned institutions and agencies is evidence of this.

#### Control measures

On public lands such as State forests, national parks, conservation parks, nature reserves and Unallocated Crown Land, which totals more than 90 million ha in WA, the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPAW) is largely responsible for controlling pest animals such as those mentioned above.

While DPAW has some programs for controlling some pest animals, including aerial baiting and aerial shooting, it does not have the resources to control all pests across all public lands – in fact of the 90 M ha or so of public lands administered by DPAW, DPAW attempts control of some pest animals on about 5 M ha, or about 7% of the public land it manages – it does not have, and will never have, the resources to manage all pest animals on all of the public lands.

Tightly controlled, licenced recreational hunters using both trapping and firearms can complement and integrate with the efforts of government agencies in pest animal control, at no cost to the government – in fact it should be possible for government to generate revenue from a well organised and run program.

Key elements of a successful program include:

1. Public safety – this is critical - measures such as accreditation, zoning, training, licencing etc. would be need to be put in place to reduce the risks of death or injury to the public and to hunters through firearms. For example, the use of recreational hunters should be applied in areas of public lands where government agencies are unable to operate due to resource limitations and which are away from population centres – i.e., more remote parts of the state. Recreational hunters, in addition to being licenced by WA Police to own firearms, should be required to undertake an accredited firearms safety training course such as the course run by DPAW, at their own expense. Refresher courses should be run every 3 years. Hunters would need to pay for a licence/registration to hunt on public lands, with the licence fee set to cover costs of running the program. Such registered hunters would need to be given strict limits/instructions on who, when and where they can hunt and what they can hunt. These important details need to be worked through.

## 2. Animal welfare

Consistent with animal welfare legislation, it is essential that registered recreational hunters are trained and accredited in the humane destruction of pest animals, with the cost of training and of refresher courses being borne by the hunter.

## 3. Cost effectiveness

Run properly, with the right cost and fee structures, this program should be cost neutral, or even financially beneficial to government. It should result in the reduction in the population of pest animals on public lands at no cost to the government. Any reduction in pest animals will have environmental benefits, but I suggest the program be structured to have a monitoring component so that actual data can be gathered to evaluate the extent of pest animal control and of environmental benefits of such a

program.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission, which is brief, but I think touches on key issues. I would be willing to elaborate, or discuss these issues further with the Committee.

Sincerely,

Dr Neil Burrows