

Mr John Bradley
Secretary
Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action
PO Box 500
East Melbourne VIC 3002



By email: wildlife.policy@delwp.vic.gov.au

6 July 2023

Dear Mr Bradley,

RE: Review of the Kangaroo Harvest Management Plan

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the Victorian Government's new Kangaroo Harvest Management Plan being drafted by DEECA.

Kangaroo control is an essential process for Victorian primary producers to ensure they can limit the damage and cost inflicted onto their businesses by the pest animals. Kangaroos require harvesting to maintain a balanced environment that ensure farm businesses can be economically and ecologically sustainable, whilst also ensuring the availability and affordability of food for the community.

The VFF has long been supportive of a commercial kangaroo harvest management plan for the humane management of the kangaroo population. Feedback from our members and other primary producers indicates that although the system could be improved for efficiency, the KHMP is working as designed. However, we would like it noted that we believe there are considerable deficiencies in the assigning of the quota system, which allows harvesters to assist primary producers in controlling kangaroos.

The key areas of concern for our members (which we believe could enhance the current management plan) include improving population survey methods, ensuring adequate allocated quota numbers for harvesters, and reforming the quota system to reallocate unused tags to regions with the need and demand for increased quotas.

In relation to kangaroo numbers and surveys, the current aerial method used for population analysis has been identified as effective only in areas of cleared land. This leads to a large portion of the kangaroo population (those inhabiting bushland) remaining uncounted.

The unmeasured population isn't considered in the annual quota allocation, impacting producers adjacent to these bushland areas. They face inflated kangaroo numbers grazing their pastures and crops and damaging fences. The economic impact on farmers is significant due to loss of pasture, crop damage, and infrastructure damage including fences, gates, and laneways.

Departments of agriculture consider that a single kangaroo has the competitive impact equivalent to 1 DSE (Dry Sheep Equivalent¹). In terms of impact on pasture, this would equate to every kangaroo having a grazing impact equivalent to a 50kg dry ewe. This impact is unsustainable not only in terms of economic outcomes but also for animal health and welfare as livestock will struggle to meet their energy demands if significant amounts of pasture have been lost to kangaroos grazing. The KHMP plays a crucial role in negating the effects that kangaroos have on pasture, as well as on crops.

The quotas currently determined for the KHMP have sparked concern among primary producers. They feel the quotas are too low and insufficient for managing the increasing kangaroo burden. They are also of the opinion that quota distribution should align more closely with peak fodder conservation periods. Therefore, the VFF proposes a readjustment of the allocated quota numbers to accommodate this. Moreover, a general consensus indicates that Victorian kangaroo numbers are growing in severity, leading to calls for an overall increase in quota numbers.

To aide the efforts of farmers in protecting pastures, crops, and farm infrastructure, the VFF proposes the quota system be reformed. This would involve the reallocation of tags from one region to another in the event that tags are unused or there is a request for further tags from another region. This ability to reassign tags to a neighboring region would aide farmers in their ability to control kangaroo numbers, while still ensuring that the quota numbers for the year remain stable.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback during this consultation period on the new KHMP and would be happy to assist the Department further in its drafting.

Yours sincerely,



Scott Young

President

VFF Livestock Group

Cc: The Hon. Gayle Tierney MP, Minister for Agriculture

The Hon. Ingrid Stitt MP, Minister for Environment

¹ Pahl, L, 'Macropods, feral goats, sheep and cattle. Equivalency in how much they eat', *The Rangeland Journal* 41(6) pp. 497-518. <https://doi.org/10.1071/RJ19044>