



National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program (SEQ) Steering Committee  
Monday 14 December 2020  
Teleconference  
3.00 – 5.00pm

ATTENDANCE

Attendees	Wendy Craik, Chair Jo Laduzko, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (C'wealth) Aimee Aird, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) (QLD) Anne Walters, Department of Primary Industry and Resources (NT) Scott Charlton, Department of Primary Industries (NSW) Nigel Ainsworth, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (VIC) Rae Burrows, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (TAS)
Program Presenters	Graeme Dudgeon, General Manager Andrew Turley, Strategy Director
Observers	Malcolm Letts, Deputy Director-General/Chief Biosecurity Officer, Biosecurity Queensland, (DAF) Tom Roberts, A/Manager, Policy
A/Secretariat	Sonia Marsanic, Policy Officer, (NRIFAEP)
Apologies	John van Schagen, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (WA) Lloyd Klumpp, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (TAS), John Robertson, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) (QLD) Justine Clarke, Chief Finance Officer, DAF (QLD)

MAIN DISCUSSION AND FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

The meeting opened at 3.00pm.

The Chair welcomed Steering Committee members, Rae Burrows on behalf of Lloyd Klumpp, Aimee Aird on behalf of John Robertson, Malcolm Letts and Program staff to the teleconference, and noted apologies from John van Schagen, Justine Clark, and Kerri Nobbs.

Graeme Dudgeon provided an update regarding the consequences of the recent localised flooding events in South-East Queensland and how it may be impacting the Program. The wet season was anticipated and schedule contingencies for up to 30% lost work-days have been built into the Work Plan. It is



envisaged that most catch up treatment will occur after Christmas. This is not an atypical weather event therefore should not severely impact the Program.

## 2020-21 REVISED WORK PLAN OPTIONS

- Background was provided from the last Steering Committee meeting where the possibility of further funding for this financial year seemed unlikely. As a result, the Program has proposed various Work Plan options for 2020/21 which stay within the currently available funding and which still effectively address spread risk in the Southern Containment Area (SCA).
- NSW stated it might be able to provide additional funding for this financial year. The Program has considered how this extra funding could be used in line with the various options, if it was to be provided.
- Andrew Turley highlighted three key priorities:
  - clearance treatment of approximately 15 000ha per treatment
  - detections of interest treatment in the south of approximately 10 000ha per treatment
  - containing the natural spread of fire ants south.
- The principles underlying any decision were:
  - eradication treatment in Area 1 and Western boundary is critical
  - demonstration of treatment innovation is critical
  - less treatment is required for areas with low density of ants
  - 5km treatment required to stop (not just delay) the natural spread of fire ants.
- The options provided to the Steering Committee were:
  - **Option A:** Removes 1 treatment round from all of Area 2, with these savings used for the SCA. It includes SCA treatment as per the original plan but with some of the northern Gold Coast self-management reallocated to residential areas further west in the SCA.
  - **Option B:** Removes toxicant bait treatment from Area 2-03 and Area 2-02 and defers the use (and cost) of half of the toxicant to next treatment season. This option retains some of the original 4-round treatment for Area 2 including part the toxicant trial. SCA treatment is included as per Option A.
  - **Option C:** Maintains the adjusted plan being implemented, treating Area 2 as the priority, applying all planned 4-round treatment variations, as well as all clearance area (Area 1 and Western Boundary) treatment, at the expense of the SCA treatment.
- The Program's recommendation is Option B, noting that half of the toxicant will not be used this year under this option, but would need to be used next year. This would increase treatment costs next financial year compared with the original Work Plan.
- The Steering Committee again noted the importance of undertaking treatment in high density urban areas through self-management along with the risk of not treating the SCA. These concerns are addressed in Option B.
- In the SCA, one round of IGR treatment will, on average, deliver 80% kill rate on RIFA nests. As the SCA has a low density of fire ants, the risk of spread from residual nests is lower than in other areas.



- Graeme Dudgeon outlined what would be included if Option B was selected, and more funding became available. This includes:
  - adding all of the 4<sup>th</sup> round of treatment back onto Area 2, meaning no extra costs incurred for next financial year. This cost is estimated at \$4M
  - purchasing a second camera pod for remote sensing would be beneficial, allowing up to an additional 60 000ha surveillance each season, and also provides a backup if one was out of action for any reason. The cost of an extra camera pod is estimated at \$750 000, plus some setup costs.
- The Steering Committee noted that an updated Ten-Year Plan should include strategies to reduce eradication costs by pursuing self-management of fire ants in urban areas. The Program has demonstrated that broadscale baiting has been effective in Area 1 and the Western Boundary. However, the Program needs to demonstrate how it can effectively eradicate fire ants in heavily urban environments.
- The Steering Committee also noted the Program is enforcing the biosecurity obligation for high risk industries, such as developers, to conduct self-management activities. Existing legislation to support this.
- The Steering Committee considers discussion of funding with cost-share partners requires a clear definition of eradication and a current benefit cost analysis which needs to incorporate Australia wide impacts. Based on what has been learned over the last few years, an updated Ten-Year Plan and funding options are required to be developed for consideration by the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC) and AGMIN. Ministerial approval will be required prior to commencing this process. The Steering Committee noted that, the Program will need to be informed as soon as possible if further funding is available, as a fourth round of treatment for Area 2 will need to be planned by mid-January 2021. Funding discussions between the Queensland and NSW Ministers will take place soon. Weather will also remain a factor that could impact treatment rounds.

#### The Steering Committee:

- **NOTED** the Program's three options and that Option B is the preferred course of action
- **AGREED** that the Program should implement Option B
- **NOTED** if additional funding becomes available for 2020-21, the Program will pursue Option B with the addition of the fourth treatment round in all of Area 2 and further investment into remote sensing (Option B+).

Action items		Responsibility	Target	Status
1.	Obtain confirmation of extra funding within the next six weeks to move forward with Option B+	Program	January 2021	In progress



## CSIRO REVIEW OF RED IMPORTED FIRE ANT SCIENTIFIC PRINCIPLES AND CONTROLS

- The report had been completed by CSIRO. However, feedback on findings has not yet been provided to key stakeholders. The options for publishing the report focus on obtaining direct and indirect stakeholder feedback.
- Options for consideration include:
  - Option A: publish the report on the Department's website and invite stakeholders for feedback.
  - Option B: Publish the report coinciding with formal stakeholder consultation for feedback
  - Option C: Seek major feedback on the report prior to public release.
- Option B provides for both formal feedback (directly contacting stakeholders involved), and general feedback from interested parties as it will be available on the website. A summary of feedback) should be published as a companion document to the CSIRO report on the website.
- The Steering Committee noted CSIRO had re-written the Program's scientific principles to be very broad and requiring additional clarification for use in an operational context. The Program's intention is to use these principles in their scientific context, but they would be elaborated upon to add operational value to movement controls.
- CSIRO suggested a number of research studies on RIFA. However, the Program's funding is inadequate to cover those costs. It was suggested university researchers might be able to assist in some of these investigations.

### The Steering Committee:

- **NOTED** CSIRO's Review of Red Imported Fire Ant Scientific Principles and Controls report and its recommendations, provided at Attachment A
- **NOTED** the summary table comparing the existing requirements for each carrier and the report's findings/recommendations, provided at Attachment B
- **NOTED** the scientific principles and provided their feedback on the value of added detail in the principles themselves
- **AGREED** with Option B under which the report is published on the website, accompanied by a formal consultation period, including contacting stakeholders involved and accepting comments by the members of the public. A companion report is to be developed on feedback to accompany the CSIRO report. The CSIRO report will be used to make future movement control decisions
- **AGREED** the Program provide the report to various committees of interest, including NBC, Plant Health Committee (with a request to pass onto the Sub-committee on Domestic Quarantine and Market Access and the Environment and Invasives Committee.
- **ENDORSED** the Program convening an internal working group to consider stakeholder feedback and any further suggestions which will be presented to the Steering Committee once completed.

Action items		Responsibility	Target	Status
2.	Publish the final CSIRO report (CSIRO internally reviewed copy) on the website	Program - Policy	January 2021	Completed.



	and begin consultation period for feedback.			
3.	Compile stakeholder and general feedback report from the review for the Steering Committee.	Program - Policy	March 2021	In Progress

The meeting closed at 4:30pm.