



National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program (SEQ) Steering Committee
Risk Management Sub-Committee (Sub-Committee)
Tuesday 15 September 2020
Brisbane, Queensland
(Held by videoconference)

MINUTES – MEETING 5

ATTENDANCE

Attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alan Millis, Chair• Irene Sitton, Independent expert• Karina Keast, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Commonwealth Government• John Robertson, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Queensland• Scott Charlton, Department of Primary Industries, NSW
Apologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wendy Craik, Chair, Steering Committee• Jo Laduzko, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Commonwealth Government• Andrew Turley, Strategy Director (NRIFAEP)
Presenters/Observers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Graeme Dudgeon, General Manager (NRIFAEP)• Brett Turville, Operations Director (NRIFAEP)• Brian Bond, Business Services Manager (NRIFAEP)
Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kerrian Nobbs (NRIFAEP)



Agenda Item 1 – Introduction

The fifth meeting of the Sub-Committee was opened by the Chair at 9.30am. Apologies from Wendy Craik and Jo Laduzko, who were unable to attend the meeting. The Chair welcomed Karina Keast to the meeting representing Jo Laduzko.

The Chair provided a brief overview of the meeting's agenda and objectives.

Minutes of the previous meeting were circulated and approved out-of-session with a minor amendment and were published to the website.

It was requested that a table of actions be presented at each meeting.

Business arising:

- The Risk Management Sub-Committee's (RMSC) Terms of Reference (ToR) were updated and approved by the Steering Committee in its August 2020 meeting. The final version was circulated to the RMSC members prior to this meeting. Two amendments to note were:
 - an additional member to the Sub-Committee with a background in marketing and communications
 - that the RMSC has a role in developing an audit program for recommendation to the Steering Committee.

Follow up on actions:

- Action 2 – the Program to maintain a complaints register:
 - participants discussed different strategies on responding to negative correspondence and publications
 - the Chair of the Steering Committee recently wrote to the editor of a paper, responding to incorrect information published regarding the Program. It was agreed this was a positive method to correct misinformation being published
 - jurisdictions should be informed of negative correspondence/publicity and key responses to same.
- Action 9 – schedule of changes to Risk Register:
 - would be beneficial to have a schedule of changes to the Risk Register provided at each meeting and have an archive version of the Risk Register aligned to the published quarterly reports.

An update was provided on the discussions with Queensland Health over regulations on administration of insecticides, which may affect the implementation of self-management. Due to Covid 19, legislative change has been delayed.

The Sub-Committee:

- **CONFIRMED** the agenda as previously circulated
- **NOTED** the minutes of Meeting 4 were endorsed out of session with a minor amendment and published to the website
- **NOTED** the revised Sub-Committee Terms of Reference
- **AGREED** a table of actions should be provided at each meeting
- **AGREED** the Program maintain a complaints register



- **AGREED** to keep jurisdictions informed of negative correspondence/publicity and key responses to same.

Action items		Responsibility	Target	Status
1	Maintain a register for monitoring comments and criticisms about the Program and respond appropriately.	Program	Ongoing	
2	Develop and maintain a set of responses and factual information for jurisdictions to share in response to queries about and comments on the Program.	Program	Ongoing	
3	Provide a table of actions for each meeting.	Secretariat	Ongoing	
4	Provide a summary of changes to the Risk Register etc.	Business Manager	Ongoing	

Agenda Item 2 – General Manager's Update

The General Manager provided a brief summary on progress and the major risks and challenges within the Program, including:

- Program Progress Update:
 - evidence of success of eradication treatment in Area 1. Surveillance has not been completed. Nine hundred high risk sites selected using a risk heat map have been surveyed. Out of the 900 sites (15-20 hectares at each site), only 19 sites had one or more fire ant nests. This is mostly due to imperfect treatment due to cropping areas, landholder refusal of treatment etc. The focus has been on the extent of the infestation at each site. Sites with only one nest have been treated immediately. Sites with multiple nests or clusters of sites with nests will receive treatment out to approximately a 2km radius. This will require diverting resources from Eradication Area 2, which poses a risk to the treatment of that area
 - real clearance process - extent of mop up treatment. This Program is different to normal eradication strategies as we cannot attack all areas at the same time. Area 1 has been set up into a grid matrix of approximately 100 cells, 5km x 5km to assist with surveillance
 - recent change to RIFA biosecurity zones. Eradication Area 1 is the first zone and the remaining eradication areas fall into the second zone. The plan is to use movement controls to ensure RIFA is not being moved from the infested area to the area where clearance is being undertaken.
- Program Funding:
 - Program costs may have been underestimated in the initial model. The Program completed a full complement of what was required to be achieved in the first three years, over an area larger than was allowed for in the first two to three years. It is



anticipated the total amount allocated to the Program will not be sufficient, especially given the need to provide for proof of freedom.

- assistance from industry to co-fund the eradication. The Program is currently undertaking to educate industry and residents that it is everyone's responsibility to assist with eradication.
- Surveillance:
 - remote sensing to assist with surveillance to achieve proof of freedom is essential and looking promising. It is now in the operational development phase, focused on new data collection and model training for different soil types etc.
- Climate/Weather Variability:
 - the weather prediction for this treatment season is very wet, which will mean significant wet days across the schedule. A rigorous schedule with contingency allowances for wet days has been developed, with strategies in place to catch up in the event the Program gets behind. In the event of flooding, the direction of the floods will be analysed to detect where fire ants may have landed
 - the Program is still working with the University of Queensland on options for wettable baits that can cope with wet weather. These may be available next season
 - the previous treatment season had significant bush fire, dust and drought issues.
- Containment
 - sentinel and boundary surveillance – as of early September 2020, there were approximately 270 sentinel sites, with only 10 of those with RIFA infestation which were treated immediately. These were mainly in the southern boundary of the infestation
 - human assisted movement – the southern containment area in the middle of the southern boundary and the Gold Coast is the most concerning. The plan is for significant suppression treatment and self-management in the community to assist with prevention of spread further south.

The Sub-Committee:

- **NOTED** the update on the Program provided by the General Manager.

Action items		Responsibility	Target	Status
	Nil			

Agenda Item 3 – Annual Review of the Risk Management Policy and Plan



Brian Bond provided an overview of the Risk Management Policy and Plan and the amendments made since the February meeting.

Issues discussed were:

- The Sub-Committee's role in managing risks within the terms of reference
- the Program's review of the standard operating procedures and work instructions, and the level of risk associated with these. A schedule has been developed to finalise these by the end of December 2020 and implementation is ongoing.
- procurement strategies – a procurement register has been developed which outlines contract expiry dates and gives the ability to analyse timeframes to complete procurement processes prior to expiry of contracts
- bait procurement process/aerial supplier contract – the DAF Director-General has signed off on variations to the current Executive Council Minutes which will enable the Program to focus on these two supplier contracts
- the Business Improvement Plan (BIP) was signed off by the Steering Committee in 2019. The BIP summarises all audits in the past and any actions that could be identified in relation to business improvement
- a summary of the Business Improvement Register was presented and discussed. This is a live document and will be updated on a regular basis and provided to the Sub-Committee for review and for information. If any risks are identified as a result of changes to the BIP these will be captured in the Risk Register
- release of Forage – the online mobile management system provided on a tablet for field staff
- structure of the meeting papers – overlap of BIP initiatives/audits and the outcomes of the Efficiency and Effectiveness (E&E) Review; and the update on the Risks and Issues Registers should be provided as separate agenda items.

The Sub-Committee:

- **APPROVED** the update of the Risk Management Policy and Plan, including an amendment to Page 23 to register approval by the Risk Management Sub-Committee
- **APPROVED** the Risk Management Policy and Plan
- **NOTED** the Business Improvement update
- **AGREED** that the BIP, the Risks and Issues Register and the Efficiency and Effectiveness items be separate agenda items for future meetings.



Action items		Responsibility	Target	Status
5	Update future meeting agendas/papers with the Business Improvement Register and the E&E Review outcomes to be separate agenda items to the Risk and Issues Registers.	Business Manager / Secretariat	Ongoing	
6	Advise the Steering Committee that the updated Risk Management Policy and Plan has been approved by the RMSC.	Secretariat	November 2020	

Agenda Item 4 – Risk and Issues Status

Brian Bond provided an overview of the Risk Register, and the summary provided with the strategic and operational risk types, including the risk descriptions, risk controls, treatment and date completed.

It was identified that strategic risks need to be clearly identified in the Risk Register as at points in time aligning to quarterly and monthly reporting. It was suggested a summary be provided quarterly, reflecting changes made to the registers. It was also suggested that the language in relation to risk treatment should be “more specific” to assist with reviewing the register and enable more focus on where the Program is at with treatment and whether the treatment is a current business improvement.

Other risks identified that should be registered correctly in the Risk Register were:

- the impact of trolls and potential targeting of Program staff on social media
- workplace, health and safety (WH&S) issues
- complaints, eg. baits dropped in water tanks.

The Program has been working with DAF Corporate on the WH&S report. There is a new system being implemented to capture the WH&S data. Unfortunately, the figures were wrongly reflected in the initial report, which has now been corrected and the numbers have dropped significantly. This better reflects the work being done at the depots with culture, WH&S and the risks, and creating awareness to ensure reports are completed. Weekly meetings are being held with the aerial teams, with complaints being a standing item.

Sub-Committee members receive notification of “significant detections” but do not receive a final report. The Steering Committee and its Sub-Committees and the National Biosecurity Committee are provided with the initial notification of a significant detection. Testing and investigations then take place over the next few months and a summary report is published to the website and provided in the quarterly reports. This was agreed to be appropriate.

The Sub-Committee:

- **NOTED** the update on the risk and issues status.



Action items		Responsibility	Target	Status
	Nil			

Agenda Item 5 – 2020-21 Treatment Season

Graeme Dudgeon provided an overview of the 2020-21 treatment season and the Treatment Plan which covers three major strategies:

1. the Program will move to Area 2, a specific defined smaller area for primary eradication treatment
2. Area 1 and the Western Boundary eradication area that need surveillance and mop up treatment
3. a substantial southern containment area that requires suppression treatment and work in a large self-management pilot with the Gold Coast community.

This will require significant agility with regard to logistics for field and aerial teams that usually have a home location in one of three depots. The teams will move around on a complex logistical plan to ensure the required work can be completed, with contingency plans in place allowing for travel time and lost days in the treatment season.

This year, the Program is undertaking a strategic pilot to conduct four rounds of treatment in one season in Eradication Area 2, to accelerate progress moving east and thereby reduce reinfestation risk associated with a more prolonged eradication period. This will also reduce the operational costs of eradication treatment.

The Scientific Advisory Group agreed to the testing of three different treatment strategies in Area 2:

1. four rounds of IGR bait, no toxicant
2. one round of IGR bait, one round of toxicant, followed by two rounds of IGR bait.
3. three rounds of IGR bait followed by a toxicant bait – using toxicant as the last treatment to expedite nest death.

Area 2 will accordingly be split into three sections and monitoring will be undertaken to determine which strategy is the most effective for eradication. More intensive treatment may allow a move to clearance in the second year. The Program will use “powers of entry” and work with residents who have crops on their property to ensure areas are not missed, to optimise the application of these four rounds for maximum chance of success.

A review of last season’s treatment showed there was a disconnect between aerial and field treatment. To make improvements this season, the aerial, field and All-Terrain Vehicle teams will all be aligned. Aerial can get a lot of treatment down in a short time, working seven days per week. The Program is monitoring operational performance, which is discussed weekly at team meetings and Management Real Time Review meetings to look at where we are at and need to be and to make adjustments accordingly. The Risk Register could be updated with the risks in the Real Time Review meetings.



A Cropping Officer has been engaged since February 2020 to communicate with cropping landholders and look at the risks of not treating their properties and the potential for self-management.

Communication issues between the Program and the aerial company have been resolved following conversations with the Chief Executive Officer. They have been very responsive to scheduling and supply and demand of their resources, especially in relation to COVID 19.

Planning is underway for the self-treatment campaign on the Gold Coast, including the area/parameters for the implementation of self-treatment. Current discussions are around:

- the objective of self-management, whether it contributes to eradication or is aimed at suppression
- the area the Program focuses on for self-management
- whether the Program provides the bait
- labelling on the bait
- impacts of COVID-19 on self-treatment.

Discussions have been held with the Gold Coast City Council regarding self-management and getting them on board to work with the community.

A meeting will be held with bait producers in late September 2020 to discuss packaging of bait products, different products, permits required and the pricing impediments for residents using the baits. Householders need to be confident that the products they are using are safe.

The Sub-Committee:

- **NOTED** the planning for the 2020-21 treatment season; the risks involved in undertaking the treatment plan; and the risk mitigation strategies implemented.
- **AGREED** the Program will circulate a copy of the Three Year Strategy and the 2020-21 Work Plan signed off by the Steering Committee

Action items		Responsibility	Target	Status
7	Circulate the Work Plan and Three Year Strategy to RMSC members	Secretariat	October 2020	Completed Sent 16/11/20
8	Add "Update Risk Register" to the Real Time Review Meeting Agenda.	Program – Business Manager	Ongoing	



Agenda Item 6 – Self Treatment

Graeme Dudgeon provided an overview of the Self-Management Risk and Issues Register which is updated and considered at the Program's Self-Management Project Board meetings.

The Chair stated that the Register is quite thorough, balanced and logical in the identification and controls of the residual risks. However, he suggested that the column 'current issues' should link to the Risk Register.

Updates required:

- Risk # 20 – 'cost of self-management outweighs business or social benefit' needs to be changed to 'cost of self-management outweighs individual, business or social benefit' and in the "Risk Controls" column, costs and benefits should be noted to include economic and social aspects
- Issue # 3 – went from extreme risk to low risk, appears to be an error
- there are formula errors within the spreadsheet to be corrected
- some ratings a little higher than expected – could provide a definition of the levels which should be consistent with risks within the Program's Risk and Issues Registers. The Register is a good operational planning supporting tool which could be reviewed in a broader Program context to see if ratings are appropriate.
- Risk # 9 – "safety breach occurs such as a child/pet consuming large quantities of bait" - needs clarification on how risky the particular item is.

The Sub-Committee:

- **NOTED** risks and issues outlined in the Self-Management Risks and Issues Register
- **AGREED** some items in the Risk and Issues Registers be updated and other comments should be followed up.

Action items		Responsibility	Target	Status
9	Items outlined above to be updated in the Risk and Issues Register as appropriate.	Program	November 2020	

Agenda Item 7 – Community Attitudes, Compliance and Enforcement

The team has taken a new approach, looking at compliance around an Audit Program and the risks associated with human movement, inspection of carriers and other industries. Over 9,000 industry groups have been identified and the team is systematically going through them to apportion risk and has developed an industry risk profiling methodology. Audits will be undertaken on the top 25 per



cent, undertaking approximately 1,000 audits this year. The team are also doing contact tracing on detections of interest to determine the source of spread, which are mostly by human carrier eg. fill, soil, turf etc. The Program is working through the detections to close the loop and provide the analysis by way of science, to help find where they may have come from and/or the responsible person.

As part of the compliance and risk profiling methodology in relation to industry, CSIRO was engaged to undertake a review of the fire ant movement control, which has been underway over the last couple of months. The Program received an interim presentation in early September and a draft report in mid-September. The final report should be available in October 2020. This will include a review of the current fire ant carriers and movement controls in place in South East Queensland, the risks associated for both Queensland and other jurisdictions and recommendations to assist the Program.

Following a recommendation from the E&E Review, a recruitment process is underway to ensure the compliance team is adequately staffed until a review in relation to compliance resourcing and its relativity to the rest of the Program and other departments at a State and Federal level is completed.

The contact tracing regime undertaken by the Program collects a bulk sample of up to 20 ants to determine if they are in fact fire ants. If so, the sample goes to the science area to do genealogy and determine if they are a relative colony of others in the Program's system; and to interrogate the system to see if there has been any related enforcement or compliance action taken in the past.

It was requested the Program share the market research undertaken with industry, which would be beneficial to see some of the attitudes with respect to interstate movement etc and also share the industry risk profiling and how it is being built, what's behind it. Brett Turville has undertaken to provide a copy to the Risk Management Sub-Committee and the Steering Committee. Jo Laduzko has agreed to review (with input from across DAWE) and provide advice on the document.

The Sub-Committee:

- **NOTED** that the Program targets the industries and locations that represent the highest risk of human assisted spread and is designed to meet the targets set in the Program's Three Year Strategy 2020-23
- **NOTED** a number of new initiatives will facilitate the Program's ability to meet these targets.

Action items		Responsibility	Target	Status
10	The Program to circulate the market research and the industry risk profiling to the RMSC and the Steering Committee.	Program – Operations Director	November 2020	



Agenda Item 8 – Reporting and Communication

Graeme Dudgeon provided an overview of the challenges around governance between the Steering Committee and the State of Queensland. Queensland is the combat state for the Program which is, however, governed through the National Steering Committee.

The Queensland Government Advertising and Communication Committee (GACC) governs all Queensland Government content and media campaigns, including the Program's campaigns. All proposals go through the various levels to GACC prior to campaigns commencing. This and COVID have caused delays in many of the Program's communications proposals.

The Program has proceeded with low level media campaigns, including social media and letter box drops in association with responding to public reports and what the Program is doing out in the eradication area. They are very limited and not whole of community campaigns.

The Program is currently progressing some campaigns through GACC, including letterbox drops in fire ant hot spots, to alert residents to report and also that they have the ability to do self-management.

The budget is also a constraint for media campaigns. The Program has to have a fine balance between outlaying large amounts of money on campaigns and spending the money on suppression.

The Committee:

- **NOTED** the risks associated with the community mobilisation strategies for the Program.

Action items		Responsibility	Target	Status
	Nil			

Agenda Item 9 – Efficiency and Effectiveness Review Recommendations Update

In addition to the paper, minutes of Meeting 3 of the Efficiency and Effectiveness Sub-Committee were circulated.

Brett Turville provided an overview of the E&E Sub-Committee and the 37 Review recommendations of which 18 are complete and 19 are on track. There is none identified as at risk or delayed. A number of sub-category tasks that had come under each of the recommendations have now been placed on the Business Improvement Register and will be monitored.

Some of the more significant recommendations from a Program and risk perspective are the:

- remote sensing trial
- significant work in relation to public response and the reputation with the public. At the beginning of the year, the Program had 3,000 public reports outstanding. A responsive team was set up to deal with the backlog and the number of public reports outstanding is down to 18. Essentially the team are now dealing with them as they come in



- compliance - there have been 10 Penalty Infringement Notices issued over last six months
- changes to the Biosecurity Zones and review of the controls
- significant work in relation to FAMS and CASES and reporting from those systems and mobility in the field. FORAGE is a mobility tool that enables teams to have access to jobs on tablets and enter and finalise as they do the work, easy to use and not paper based. The feedback is very positive.

An update report on how the E&E Sub-Committee is progressing is in draft and will be distributed when completed.

The Sub-Committee:

- **NOTED** the update provided on the work the Program had undertaken to implement the recommendations of the E&E review.

Action items		Responsibility	Target	Status
	Nil			

Agenda Item 10 – Proof of Freedom

Graeme Dudgeon provided an overview of finalising the Proof of Freedom and the area clearance model which will require refinement over time.

The timeline to get to proof of freedom is often lengthy and in large infestations such as the current one, challenging to gather accurate and consistent data over the duration of the eradication program and demonstrate complete clearance. It could be that an ongoing monitoring plan is put in place, but allowances need to be made for the nature of the pest and the country affected. A large area-based statistical model provides a methodology to deal with those circumstances. The sampling strategies are important, giving a statistical significance in what is being deduced from that data. It is also important to identify monitoring sites prior to treatment to allow valid conclusions to be drawn about the effectiveness of treatment.

Smaller fire ant infestations (eg Port Botany and Western Australia) have reached proof of freedom, as it was determined that, genetically there were none of that type of fire ant around, enabling decision makers to certify proof of freedom.

Aerial surveillance is critical and remote sensing will also increase the capability of surveillance.

Drone surveillance technology could also assist, which is similar to the technology attached to the helicopters doing surveillance. Property owners could also use drone technology to monitor their own land.

The Sub-Committee:

- **NOTED** the update to the previously identified risk surrounding the Clearance Strategy



- **NOTED** the preliminary results of the clearance surveillance being undertaken in Area 2 and the Western Boundary
- **AGREED** that the further risk identified, around field resourcing and seasonal limitations, be added to the Risk Register.

Action items		Responsibility	Target	Status
11	Add the risk identified around field resourcing and seasonal limitations to the Risk Register.	Program Science / Business Services	November 2020	

Agenda Item 11 – Development of an Audit Program

The Chair identified that the RMSC has been given the responsibility to develop an audit program. The RMSC need to assist Program management and the Steering Committee to identify audits to give the Steering Committee assurance about the Program and to assist the Program with improvement.

The Chair has had discussion with the Steering Committee Chair and noted that the E&E Report recommended that there be a follow up audit on the operational planning and governance, and procurement audits completed in 2018.

Other potential audits which could be useful, include:

- WH&S
- Payment of the workforce
- IT system developments
- Efficiency, effectiveness and efficacy
- Contracting arrangements
- Accuracy and accessibility of public reporting
- Workplace culture and behaviour – timesheets etc.
- Finances – budget.

It is of value to have independent reviews of aspects of the Program which have been criticised or carry high risks. Traditional audits eg. finance and procurement are done as a matter of course in Program audits or as part of the departmental audits overseen by the Audit and Risk Committee. If the Director-General believes there are high risks, funds may be able to be provided at a departmental level.

The Program General Manager recently presented to the DAF Audit and Risk Committee on the Governance and Procurement Audit, to provide an update on where the Program is at with implementing the recommendations. There is one outstanding, to finalise the review of the Standard Operating Procedures. The Audit and Risk Committee would commission extra reviews or scrutiny through Internal Audit if they have concerns.



It was noted that there are already a number of reviews of the Program, including the biannual E&E Review scheduled for 2021, that public reporting is quite high and that audits should not duplicate existing work.

The Sub-Committee

- **AGREED** that the Program will draft a priority list of audits to assist the Program's operations for consideration by the Sub-Committee; and follow up if internal audit or external reviews of the 2018 audits are required or whether they have been adequately dealt with.

Action items		Responsibility	Target	Status
12	Program to follow up with the DAF Audit and Risk Committee if existing processes are sufficient or if follow-up reviews of the December 2018 audits are recommended.	Program – Business Services	November 2020	In Progress
13	Draft a prioritised audit program proposal list of audits which would assist the Program's operations, for submission to the Sub-Committee out of session.	Program – Business Services	December 2020	

Other Business

The Chair advised that his term as Chair of the RMSC has been extended for a further two years.

The Chair summarised the meeting, acknowledging the significant amount of work that has been undertaken across the Program to address risks, the E&E review and audit results, and the development of Program strategy in a coordinated approach.

The next meeting to be held in March 2021.