



Media release

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Revised plan to respond to fire ants based on new insights

A review of the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program will help shape a revised response to the pest.

National Program Steering Committee Chair Dr Wendy Craik said after three years of the current plan we had learnt a great deal.

“It has become clear the nationally-cost shared budget and schedule need to be revised if we are to achieve our objective by the original 2027 deadline,” Dr Craik said.

“We are the first country in the world to attempt eradication on this scale and without the program it’s estimated fire ants would have now spread north to Bowen, west to Longreach and south to Canberra increasing the cost to industries and communities.

“We have made significant progress with about 30 per cent of the total infested area in South East Queensland treated and now undergoing clearance surveillance. But we knew from the outset that adjustments would be needed along the way as we learn and adapt.”

Dr Craik said all members of the national steering committee, which included representatives from most states, territories and the federal government, agreed it was in our national interest to continue the fight against fire ants.

“An uncontrolled fire ant infestation in Australia would cost many billions of dollars each year,” she said.

“An independent expert panel will help us revise the program based on our learnings.”

The National Biosecurity Committee has agreed that the current eradication effort be maintained while a review is conducted, ahead of any decision to revise the program.

The program continues its critical work in South East Queensland, adding to the 1,238,158 ha of land treated with fire ant bait since 2017.

The National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program is a nationally cost-shared program funded by all Australian state and territory governments, and the Federal Government. The program is governed strategically and operationally by a national Steering Committee, who work with Biosecurity Queensland to deliver the program on behalf of the other jurisdictions.

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