

Kimberley Rangelands Biosecurity Association

Invasive Species Activity Report 2017/181

Large Feral Herbivores

The Kimberley Rangelands Biosecurity Association (KRBA) has an annual Large Feral Herbivore culling program that includes feral donkeys, horses and camels with other animals such as water buffalo and pigs targeted when located. The program focusses primarily on donkeys, using the radio telemetry technique with horses and camels culled opportunistically during tracking. Currently there are 135 active collars throughout the region.

In 2016/17 due to DAFWA's limited capacity to provide shooters there were only two runs in the West Kimberley, North Kimberley, and the Halls Creek areas. Results of animals culled on those runs are as follows –

Donkeys	Horses	Camels	Pigs
120	40	nil	11

In addition to the culls four (4) new collars deployed on new donkeys in June 2018.

The horse cull should be noted as it was focussed on the Great Northern Highway between Warmun and Halls Creek targeting wild horses located on Mainroads Reserve. The aim of the cull was twofold, reduce wild horse impact on pastoral activities and increase road safety in between the two towns.

It is recognised by the KRPG that land managers also contribute to controlling feral herbivores with both opportunistic and planned culling programs of their own however no figures of those programs are available.

No aerial shooting operations were carried out over Department of Parks and Wildlife managed land by the KRBA. However Department of Parks and Wildlife did undertake its own management shoot over the Drysdale National Park and the Ord River Regeneration area.

Wild Dogs

The RBG runs two aerial baiting programs a year to support the individual ground baiting programs run by pastoral stations. They are usually programed for April and October to avoid the wet season. In 2017/18 both runs dropped baits on over 30 pastoral stations across the Kimberley. It should be noted that since 2015 the numbers of baits supplied or dropped per run in that time has more than doubled to over 600,000 with a corresponding increase in area covered by the program.

Pigs

Funding was provided to the Australian Wildlife Conservancy to carry out research on pig movement during both wet and dry seasons in the Kimberley and develop

remote operated mobile feeders as a means to control populations. A final report is expected from the project in January 2019.

Prickly Acacia

Nulla Nulla: Two control programs were carried out on the 10,578 hectare Nulla Nulla over the 2017/18 wet season. In total 118 plants were controlled a significant reduction on the previous year's control program. It's expected that total eradication could be achieved within a decade.

Gordon Downs: No survey work was carried out at this location in 2017/18.

Mesquite

Nicholson Station: Two control programs were carried out on the 10,754 hectare site over the 2016/17 wet season. In total of 1223 plants were controlled, a slight increase on the previous year.

Thangoo/Yeeda: No control was carried out on Thangoo Station but 304 plants were controlled on Yeeda Station where the program also located a small core of approximately 30 flowering rubber vine plants outside of the normal search boundaries of the West Kimberley Rubber vine program. This information was passed on to that group.

Rubber vine (*Cryptostegia grandiflora*)

Rubber vine control in the Kimberley is split between two regional locations, one in the East Kimberley and the other in the west. Both programs run independently of the other with separate steering groups overseeing the planning and work carried out. The KRBA provides funding to both programs. Other partner organisations also provide funding and in-kind contributions such as personnel to carry out the control and survey work.

East Kimberley: Rubber vine has been located at three locations in the East Kimberley – Oombulgurri, the Ord and Bow Rivers upstream of Lake Argyle and Limestone Creek adjacent to the Ord/Bow locations. A total of 7 field trips were carried out over the 2018 dry season covering 454 hectares on those locations, a slight reduction on the previous year's program. A total of 7,823 plants were treated. From the monitoring areas there was a significant reduction of plants controlled from the previous year dropping from 8,333 to 2,038.

An aerial survey program was undertaken in March 2016 covering 21,700 hectares locating 30 seeders.

West Kimberley: The aerial camera survey (Aquila) was not utilised in the 2018 program due to an exceptional wet season that reduced flowering and therefore the means to identify mature plants from the air.

It was planned and anticipated that 2018 was to be the last year of widespread ground searching of the entire Rubber Vine Infestation Area. This goal was achieved as evidenced by the results of the ground searches. The program manager is now confident that widespread ground searching is now longer required over the entire intense infestation area nor every return site. It is expected that only a small number of areas will be subjected to a further grid search in 2019. It is expected that there are a small number of more recent or active Return Sites, which will continue to be searched over several years until they have aged sufficiently where even the smallest/youngest offspring are reliably detectable.

Gamba grass

Funding was provided to the gamba grass steering group to carry out an extended survey of the El Questro infestation in search of outliers beyond the already confirmed range of the infestation. No additional plants were found.

Weed subsidies

Weed subsidies were paid out to a number of pastoral stations for the control of declared weeds on those properties.

Risk Management

A number of initiatives were undertaken in the 2017/18 financial year to reduce risks associated with the organisation's programs and membership activities, they were –

- Five 1080 injection workshops held for pastoralists to enable them to make their own baits on property.
- 'Plain English' signage was developed and distributed for pastoral properties front gates warning of the danger of bringing pet dogs onto the property due to dog baiting by either the pastoralist or the RBG.
- Twenty signs erected on regional roads and in 24 hour rest areas warning visitors that baits are laid on pastoral properties.
- Visitor information pamphlets were printed for distribution alerting visitors to the region on activities that regularly occur on pastoral properties that they need to be aware of before entering any of those properties.

Member engagement

The following engagement strategies were implemented in the 2017/18 financial year:

- Newsletters were sent to members.
- A 'one on one' survey was carried out between October and December of 2017 with information recorded from 69 of the 91 Kimberley leases. This information was and will be used to guide future operational plans for the RBG.
- A number of stakeholder meetings were attended by the staff and members of the committee.