

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program (SEQ) Steering Committee

Thursday 7 October 2021

Teleconference

9.00am – 11.00am

ATTENDANCE

Attendees	<p>Wendy Craik, Chair</p> <p>Jo Laduzko, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (C'wealth)</p> <p>Scott Charlton, Department of Primary Industries (NSW)</p> <p>Nigel Ainsworth, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (VIC)</p> <p>John van Schagen, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (WA)</p> <p>Marcelle O'Brien, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (TAS)</p> <p>Nathan Rhodes, Department of Primary Industries and Regions (SA)</p> <p>Mike Richards, External Financial Consultant</p>
Observers	<p>Malcolm Letts, Deputy Director-General/Chief Biosecurity Officer, Biosecurity Queensland, (DAF)</p> <p>Graeme Dudgeon, General Manager</p> <p>Andrew Turley, Strategic Review Secretariat</p> <p>Mel Blankenberg, A/Director, Strategy</p> <p>Brett Turville, Director Operations</p> <p>Jacqui King, Director, Invasive Plants and Animals</p> <p>Carmel Kerwick, A/General Manager, Strategy and Legislation</p>
Secretariat	<p>Kerrian Nobbs, Senior Policy Officer, (NRIFAEP)</p>
Apologies	<p>John Robertson, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) (QLD)</p> <p>Anne Walters, Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade (NT)</p> <p>Rae Burrows, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (TAS)</p>

The meeting opened at 9.00am.

MAIN DISCUSSION

The Chair welcomed members to the extraordinary Steering Committee meeting and Jacqui King on behalf of John Robertson who was an apology. Anne Walters was also an apology for the meeting.

Minutes for the extraordinary meeting held on 30 September 2021 were taken as a correct record, with all actions completed.

Malcolm Letts advised that the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting agenda paper, "Future of the National Red Imported Fire Ant (RIFA) Program can be presented at the Agriculture Senior Officials' Committee meeting being held on 14 October 2021 for consideration. The paper will then be tabled at the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting being held on 1 November 2021 when members will be given the opportunity to review the paper and respond. The Steering Committee discussed the draft version of the paper and agreed to provide urgent feedback.

An update was provided on the bring forward of funding, including advice received from the Victorian jurisdiction that they agree to bring forward funds. Other states and territories were requested to provide a response as soon as possible.

The Steering Committee's response to the Strategic Review Report recommendations was updated to incorporate further feedback and was approved by all members. The Steering Committee's response will be presented at the National Biosecurity Meeting being held on 11-12 November 2021.

An update was provided on the Strategy for the Control of Red Imported Fire Ant in Australia, incorporating comments from the Steering Committee. Options A, B and C were presented. The Steering Committee supported Option A and considered an implementation option, Option A1 and an alternative approach from Queensland, Option A2. Detailed costings, KPIs and triggers for review in the 'A' Options need to be developed. It was also suggested that two further implementation options for Option C be considered. Members were requested to provide further feedback on the Strategy.

The Queensland Fire Ant Control Plan was presented with inclusion of the suggested amendments. Members were requested to review the document and provide feedback.

An update was provided on Remote Sensing Surveillance to enable consideration of its feasibility for surveillance at a landscape scale within the Program. It will be a vital component in the decisions about the continued viability of the Program. It is likely that immediate decisions on funding capital equipment are likely to be needed immediately following the Agriculture Ministers' decision if Options A1 or A2 of the review plan is to be implemented. The suppliers of the remote sensing equipment will need to be notified by December 2021 for procurement of extra cameras for use in the next surveillance season commencing in May 2022. Queensland is working towards procuring at least two further cameras for next surveillance season.

The Steering Committee welcomed John Rolfe and Megan Star from Central Queensland University, authors of the Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) – Assessing the Impacts of the Red Imported Fire Ant. Mr Rolfe and Ms Star provided an overview of the models used and discussed the results. The CBA is currently being peer reviewed by the Centre of Excellence for Biosecurity Risk Analysis, with a response expected on 11 October 2021.

The Steering Committee:

- **AGREED** to support Option A1, pending more detailed costings and analysis being provided and two further options under Option C.
- **AGREED** to include Option C in the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting Brief.
- **AGREED** to provide feedback on the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting Brief by COB Monday 11 October 2021.
- **AGREED** the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting brief will be submitted to AGSOC by COB Tuesday 12 October 2021.
- **AGREED** to provide further feedback on the Strategy for the Control of Red Imported Fire Ant in Australia by cob Monday, 11 October 2021.
- **AGREED** to provide further feedback on the Queensland Fire Ant Taskforce (Control) Plan.

Action items		Responsibility	Target	Status
1.	Provide feedback on the draft Agriculture Ministers' Meeting Brief.	Steering Committee members	11 October 2021	Completed
2.	Submit the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting brief to AGSOC.	Carmel Kerwick	12 October 2021	Completed
3.	Provide further feedback on the Strategy for the Control of Red Imported Fire Ant in Australia.	Steering Committee members	11 October 2021	Completed - Comments received.
4.	Provide feedback on the Queensland Fire Ant Taskforce (Control) Plan.	Steering Committee members	14 October 2021	Completed - Comments received.