



The National Red Imported Fire Ant Program Efficiency & Effectiveness Review Progress Report – May 2021

Recommendation Status Table	
Underway	4
Complete	33
TOTAL	37

Recommendation 1: The Steering Committee and Program consider commissioning Monash University to repeat its delimitation analysis.

Status: Complete

Monash University has submitted the reports for the Program and the Steering Committee. Monash concluded that available data were insufficient to enable a conclusion to be drawn regarding the geographic boundary of the spread of ants with any confidence.

Recommendation 2: The Steering Committee and Program examine the design of suppression zones where they are meant to provide protection to areas treated for eradication against re-infestation.

Status: Complete

The Program has examined the design of the suppression zones and has included all of the infested areas adjacent to eradication areas into the treatment protocol and treatment plans. This is also reflected in the Program's annual Work Plan and Three-Year Strategy.

Recommendation 3 Priority: A new set of 'outcome focused' Program performance indicators for use by the Steering Committee, funding partners and community stakeholders be finalised as soon as possible with a view to deployment this financial year.

Status: Complete

The Program incorporated outcome focused performance indicators into its Three-Year Strategy. This was approved out-of-session by the Steering Committee in June 2020. Given the Program is in its fourth year these KPIs are appropriately related to the Program's 10-year objectives. They are also reflected in the Annual work plan.

Recommendation 4 Priority: The Steering Committee, in consultation with the Program, sets out business improvement measures to overcome barriers and impediments to treatment and surveillance identified in this Review.



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Status: Complete

The Program has implemented a number of changes to remove barriers to treatment and surveillance:

- ensuring adequate and timely supply of critical inputs such as contract labour, bait and aerial services
- using agile project planning methods to ensure on-time commencement of seasonal work
- developing explicit contingencies for known threats to work schedules, e.g. wet or windy weather
- frequent progress reviews to ensure rapid adjustments are made to treatment and/or surveillance plans should they be necessary.

The business improvement measures have also been incorporated into the Program's monthly and quarterly reports. Percentages of planned work completed in 2020/21 are much improved.

Recommendation 5: The Program accord a very high priority to necessary treatment and surveillance to deal with significant detections outside the Operating Area boundary.

Status: Complete

The Program completed a review on its current response to significant detections which has prompted an amendment to the Management of Detections Protocol. Our current response actions pertain to activities such as treatment, surveillance, tracing and reporting to stakeholders and this is supported by a detections of importance schedule which lists the actions required within a certain period of time.

The Program has developed an extensive response for detections posing the most significant risk to the success of our eradication activities. This includes:

- the escalation process of significant detections to the SOS committee
- extended treatment requirements
- first responder approach
- enforcing entry to a place under a Biosecurity Program and
- additional surveillance actions.

In relation to Detections of Interest, the Program enacts the protocol which includes substantial communication and engagement with the immediate communities affected, and notification of elected members and peak bodies.

A revised response plan has been developed by Program Scientists. The management of detections of importance protocol is being incorporated into the Program's mobile data system, known as Forage. This will make it easier for field officers to determine whether a detection is located outside of the operational boundary, within five km of the operational boundary, or within an area that has recently undergone eradication treatment. In these instances, field officers are required to immediately alert the Program in accordance with the Programs work instruction. When the system is fully developed it will provide field officers with the necessary steps regarding what their immediate treatment and/or surveillance requirements are upon discovery of a detection of importance.



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Recommendation 6 Priority: The Steering Committee and the Program clarify the nature of the shared public-private responsibility for eradication and suppression of RIFA at the earliest opportunity.

Status: Complete

Extensive public awareness communications were provided to the community and industry to emphasise the shared responsibility to report, treat and avoid moving fire ants.

The Program began the introduction of broad-scale self-management initiatives in mid-2019. Self-management aims to empower industry and the community to treat fire ants themselves, which will increase the amount of fire ant treatment conducted in our community and is a vital aspect of meeting the General Biosecurity Obligation (GBO) applying to Queensland residents. The Program has also developed guidelines for appropriate risk mitigation strategies for industries that move high risk fire ant carriers e.g., soil, hay and a draft GBO policy that clearly sets out the Program's intentions.

The GBO is being implemented in practice through the Program's operations.

Recommendation 7 Priority: The Steering Committee guide the Program towards the development of appropriate regulation aimed at internalising the cost to those responsible for the creation of habitat suitable for RIFA infestation.

Status: Complete

This Recommendation has been incorporated into Recommendation 6.

Recommendation 8: That compliance officers employed by the Program make effective use of penalty infringement notices and, where appropriate, prosecution provisions, to improve compliance with movement controls.

Status: Complete

The Program's compliance officers are issuing penalty infringement notices and biosecurity orders when warranted. The only mechanism for cost recovery is for the offending entity or company to be prosecuted through the court process.

Recommendation 9: The Program make every effort to meet compliance check targets by keeping compliance staffing at funded staffing levels.

Status: Complete

The Program makes every effort to ensure appropriate compliance staffing levels are met. This recommendation will continue to be monitored and progressed through the Program's business improvement register with updates provided in the monthly or quarterly reports.

Recommendation 10: The Program seeks advice from appropriate sources with the necessary expertise on appropriate sampling numbers for the range of movements of RIFA carrier materials.



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Status: Complete

The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) reviewed the Program's scientific principles and movement of fire ant carriers which included stakeholder engagement. The review found that the existing controls provide effective mitigation against fire ant infestation and spread but relies on industry compliance. The Program is considering the CSIRO review, SAG and public feedback on the CSIRO report.

Unfortunately, the CSIRO review focused on movement controls and not sampling numbers during their review. The Program identified complications whilst looking into sampling numbers due to the difference between static and transient industries.

The Program has conducted a random sampling technique for static industries such as turf farms and landscaping yards to gauge compliance and is looking at how high-risk transient industries, such as hay and earth moving industries can be measured, as this has proven to be difficult to measure because of the difference between the office and work locations. Innovations will continue to be looked for as part of business as usual.

Recommendation 11 Priority: The Program, with guidance from the Steering Committee, examine the feasibility of introducing regulation requiring inspection of loads destined to cross the Operating Area boundary and cost recovery of the additional compliance effort.

Status: Complete

The Program and the Steering Committee are in consultation with numerous parties in relation to this recommendation but under the current budget this is not feasible.

Recommendation 12 Priority: The Steering Committee and the Program determine a strategy to urgently bring outstanding reviews concerning human-assisted movement of RIFA to fruition.

Status: Complete

This recommendation is being addressed as part of the review of movements of RIFA carrier materials (as per recommendation 10).

Recommendation 13 Priority: The Steering Committee and the Program initiate more detailed analysis of the efficiency options identified in this report for possible uptake as soon as possible.

Status: Complete

The Program has undertaken a comprehensive analysis on the efficiency options and implemented changes to multiple areas of the Program through the business improvement process.

Recommendation 14: That the Steering Committee and Program closely examine the potential for future savings from the use of tenders to procure aerial services and bait.



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Status: Complete

This recommendation has been integrated into and addressed within recommendation 13 and 16.

Recommendation 15: That the Steering Committee and Program examine more closely the labour productivity of field teams with a view to raising labour productivity.

Status: Complete

This recommendation has been integrated into and addressed within recommendation 16.

Recommendation 16: That the Steering Committee and Program examine the introduction of revised remuneration arrangements for field staff based on an output rather than input measure of performance and/or invite tenders for specified areas of treatment or surveillance from labour hire firms.

Status: Complete

The Program will continue to review operational performance and make any changes necessary to ensure delivery of the annual treatment and surveillance plans. The Program management team regularly review field staffing numbers to ensure that field staff are retained in the Program where possible. A range of improvements in the operation program has greatly improved efficiency.

Recommendation 17 Priority: The Steering Committee work with the Program to set a planning cycle to be made available to all staff and detailing required timing of work plans, treatment, surveillance and budget plans for approval by the relevant delegate.

Status: Complete

Planning cycle has been included in the Program's three-year strategy (refer to recommendation 3).

Recommendation 18: The Program, with guidance from the Steering Committee, should work to revise the set of Standard Operating Procedures as soon as possible.

Status: Complete

The Program has a total of 132 Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) and has undertaken a review on 100% of them. Of the of 132 SOPs, 69 have been archived and 63 have been reviewed and approved for use.

The review was undertaken as a number of SOPs were either out of date (>12 months since last review) which is not in accordance with our new Management and Control of Documentation SOP. A number of SOPs had not yet been approved by the Manager and were still in draft form or needed to be created or updated to reflect current practice.

The review of all operational documents as part of this recommendation has been completed.

Recommendation 19: The Steering Committee consider the benefits and costs of appointing a Deputy General Manager.



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Status: Complete

The Program appointed two director positions since December 2019 and to date improvements continue to be illustrated across the whole Program. The Steering Committee believes that the current approach is effective.

Recommendation 20: The Steering Committee and the Program consider the potential cost savings along with the risks for RIFA eradication before deciding whether to proceed with fewer treatments.

Status: Complete

The Program is trialling:

- reducing time and intensity of Eradication treatment by conducting only four treatments (compared to up to 5 previously) within one treatment season (September – May) in 2020/21.
- a modified treatment regime in the second eradication area that involves using rounds of different baits in combination, aimed at improving the overall efficiency and cost effectiveness of the Program's treatment activities.

Recommendation 21 Priority: The Steering Committee consider the underlying themes of its communication strategy, particularly in the light of the Program launching the self-management component.

Status: Complete

A presentation was made to the National Biosecurity Communications and Engagement Network (NBCEN) on 14 October 2020 which outlined the mobilisation strategy, including the self-management components for community and industry. The group was supportive of the strategies presented.

Recommendation 22: The Steering Committee review the content of the Program's website and the Program develop a timetable to implement the Steering Committee's findings.

Status: Complete

The website has been reviewed and will be branded in line with the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program, acknowledging all funding partners. The website will appear separate from the Queensland Government website and meets the Queensland Government privacy and security requirements.

The project is being delivered in two phases with the first phase scheduled for completion in June 2021. Phase one will include a homepage and a small number of content pages, with links to the locations of existing content on Queensland Government websites. Phase two will include full content migration.

Recommendation 23: The Steering Committee design and adopt new badging recognising the national character of the Program and its funding by the Commonwealth and the States and Territories.

Status: Complete

The Program has continued work with a creative agency to rebrand the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program.

The roll out of the Program rebranding will coincide with completion of fire ant campaign development work and the website, which are both scheduled for delivery in June 2021.

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Recommendation 24: The Program accord high priority to putting in place as soon as possible a real-time two-way mobile data solution.

Status: Complete

The Program has implemented its 'FORAGE' application to support field mobility. The initial trial occurred in August 2020 with positive feedback from field staff on its use. The project was successfully implemented by April 2021. The key functionality that was delivered for this project include:

Stage 1 – Planned Surveillance (including targeted, sentinel, and clearance surveillance)

Stage 2 – Planned treatment, Pre and Post flight aerial buffering ground treatment, as well as delineation.

Stage 3 – Sample submission functionality including scanning of sample barcodes.

Recommendation 25: The Steering Committee monitor the adequacy of key Program intelligence systems, particularly the Fire Ant Management System (FAMS).

Status: Underway

The Program has completed internal reviews of the systems architecture for CRM, CaSES, and a refresh of the FAMS architecture documentation. Although further continuous improvements are being made, some of these would be best implemented after the strategic review in order to avoid wasted expenditure should overarching frameworks change.

Recommendation 26: The Program bring forward a Three-Year Strategic Plan addressing the implications of decisions on key issues identified in this Review for consideration by the Steering Committee as soon as possible.

Status: Complete

This recommendation is complete. See recommendation 3.

Recommendation 27 Priority: The Program bring forward for Steering Committee consideration their proposed approach to management information to assist decision making.

Status: Underway

The Program has developed a score card of looking at strategic measures (Program KPI's). This is a combination of KPIs, financial measures and operational performance. A key benefit is that it gives the Program a view between the various components of strategic planning and daily operations. It creates a visible connection between the projects, Program's workforce and the measurements being used to track success and the strategic objectives the Program is trying to accomplish. The scorecard is being used currently and forms part of the reporting process as well as assisting in making better decisions.

Recommendation 28 Priority: The Steering Committee request out of session monthly updates on progress with actions included in the Business Improvement Plan as well as a quarterly report to the Steering Committee.



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Status: Complete

In February 2020 the Program commenced its monthly reporting in addition to the quarterly reports including the Program's progress and business improvement updates.

Recommendation 29: The Steering Committee request a follow up audit of operational planning, governance and procurement to be conducted in April 2020.

Status: Underway

The audit will be undertaken. However the program is currently under review. A decision on scheduling of the audit will be made post review.

Recommendation 30 Priority: The Steering Committee consider the findings and recommendations of this Review and determine a strategy for how to best address the issues requiring resolution over the next 12–18 months.

Status: Complete

The Steering Committee established a sub-committee supported by a project officer who commenced in April 2020 to monitor and progress the review. The Committee has completed its work and further progress will be monitored through monthly, quarterly and annual reports.

Recommendation 31 Priority: The Steering Committee review the expertise it needs to progress the issues at hand and seek nominations from the jurisdictions to address any identified gaps.

Status: Complete

The Steering Committee has a new member who provides financial expertise. The selection of another member with additional expertise has been deferred as a result of COVID-19.

Recommendation 32: The Steering Committee consider the appointment of a Project Officer to support their work.

Status: Complete

This recommendation is complete as per update in recommendation 30.

Recommendation 33: The Steering Committee schedule additional and/or longer meetings to address the issues requiring attention over the next 12-18 months.

Status: Complete

The Steering Committee have increased their meeting frequency online as opposed to the quarterly face to face meetings as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendation 34: The Steering Committee form additional sub-committees to help progress its work.



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Status: Complete

The Steering Committee established an Efficiency and Effectiveness Review sub-committee to progress these recommendations. The Steering Committee also seeks advice from the National Biosecurity Communication and Engagement Network in relation to improving the Steering Committee and Program's web presence.

The Chair of the Steering Committee advised that there is no need for further subcommittees at this stage.

Recommendation 35 Priority: The Steering Committee establish its own communication strategy complementing the work of the Program, including as soon as possible its own website.

Status: Underway

A Steering Committee website will be established on the Australian Government Biosecurity portal.

The new RIFA website has recently undergone additional development to satisfy the requirements of the NRIFAEP Steering Committee (SC). The Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment (DAWE) and the Program are collaborating to transfer and upload several SC documents on the DAWE hosted website, including Efficiency and Effectiveness documents.

Navigating a range of specific accessibility requirements for DAWE web content and architecture is delaying the process to launch the website. These are being worked through with relevant parties.

Recommendation 36: The Scientific Advisory Group develop a work program responding to science related issues the Steering Committee and Program face and adjust as necessary its working arrangements to address the needs of the Program.

Status: Complete

The SAG Terms of Reference were revised and approved by the Steering Committee in August 2020.

Recommendation 37: The Risk Management Group's Terms of Reference be amended to accommodate the initiation of Program related audits and monitoring of progress in management responses for advice to the Steering Committee.

Status: Complete

Terms of reference were updated and approved by the Steering Committee in August 2020.



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