



NATIONAL  
**Fire Ant Eradication**  
 PROGRAM

<u>MEETING DATE</u>	<u>AGENDA ITEM</u>	<u>OUTCOME</u>
8 March 2023	<b>Remote Sensing Surveillance Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>item was <b>noted</b> and the Program's request for an independent review of the RSS Review was endorsed.</li> </ul>
	<b>Legislative Responsibility (General Biosecurity Obligation)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>noted</b> that the Program is developing a guideline under the Biosecurity Act 2014 to provide advice on how individuals and businesses can discharge their GBO in relation to preventing fire ant infestation on property they control.</li> <li><b>noted</b> that the Program continues to explore potential enhancements to the biosecurity regulatory framework.</li> <li><b>agreed</b> the Program would commission an independent consultant to complete an assessment on the risk of fire ant movement in the interstate movement of commodities.</li> </ul>
	<b>Governance Arrangement for the National Fire Ant Eradication Program 2023-27</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>noted that the Governance Plan endorsed at the December 2022 meeting has been amended in response to members requests for minor edits.</li> <li>members <b>endorsed</b> the updated Governance Plan, after the Chair's edits and reporting diagram have been updated, to be forwarded as part of the package of accompanying documents to the Tactical Response Plan 2023-27.</li> </ul>
	<b>Proof of Freedom Strategy (PoF)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members <b>noted</b> the Proof of Freedom Strategy had been independently reviewed by the Centre for International Economics and the report presented to the NRIFAEP on 3 March 2023.</li> <li>Recommendations within the report were discussed and the Proof of Freedom Strategy noting the comments made by the Steering Committee was <b>endorsed</b>.</li> </ul>
	<b>NFAEP Tactical Operational Response Plan 2023-27</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was <b>noted</b> the draft Response Plan has been updated to incorporate feedback from Steering Committee members following the December 2022 extraordinary meeting.</li> <li>the Program's draft Response, noting the qualifying comments of the Steering Committee, to be forwarded to the AgSOC related to their endorsement to AgMIN, was <b>endorsed</b>.</li> <li><b>agreed</b> the Response Plan to be amended to include bi-annual review of CPI figures and to include NBC in the reporting diagram, and the Eradication Strategy, Governance Plan, Proof of Freedom Strategy, review of the Remote Sensing Surveillance and current risk matrix would accompany the Response Plan when forwarded to AgSOC.</li> </ul>
	<b>FAST Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>noted</b> the draft Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce Plan 2022-23 to 2025-26.</li> <li><b>endorsed</b> the draft FAST Plan, noting the Steering Committee's comments to be sent via email by 15 March 2023.</li> <li><b>agreed</b> to include the FAST Plan in the suite of documents being provided to AgSOC.</li> </ul>
	<b>AgSOC / AgMIN Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the proposed process for obtaining Agriculture Minister's approval for the Response Plan 2024-27 and associated budget was <b>noted</b>.</li> </ul>
	<b>Financial Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the January 2023 Financial Performance Report, the remaining funding under the 10 Year Eradication Plan and the reconciliation of prior year cost sharing apportionment payments were <b>noted</b>.</li> </ul>
	<b>Transition to Management Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>available options to progress the transition to management plan once a decision has been made by the agriculture ministers regarding the Tactical Operational Response Plan 2023-2027 were <b>discussed</b>.</li> </ul>

24 May 2023		<b>CANCELLED</b>
15 June 2023 (Extraordinary meeting)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>members <b>noted</b> that at the request of the National Biosecurity Committee, the Response Plan 2023-27 has been restructured to consolidate documents, to align with National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement (NEBRA) requirements and to include a detailed Work Plan 2023-24.</li> <li>the Work Plan 2023-24 was <b>discussed</b> and <b>endorsed</b> with no material changes.</li> <li>it was <b>noted</b> that an out-of-session paper is being progressed urgently to the Agriculture Senior Officials' Committee (AGSOC) to request senior officials endorse a request to Agriculture Ministers' Meeting (AMM) to bring forward previously approved funding to fund the Program in 23-24.</li> <li>it was <b>noted</b> that a second AGSOC paper is planned that will request endorsement of the Response Plan 2023-2027 and in-principle endorsement of the budget subject to jurisdictional budgetary processes.</li> <li>it was <b>noted</b> the Response Plan 2023-27 will be amended with agreed changes prior to progressing to AGSOC for endorsement.</li> <li>it was <b>noted</b> that national cost share partner support for continuation of work towards the next phase of response is urgently sought to provide some level of surety to the Program to allow procurement, staff retention and recruitment and to recognise that further delays in approval increases risks that impact the efficiency and effectiveness of the Program.</li> </ul>
23 August 2023	<b>Program Executive Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>noted</b> that the Program is working towards the Work Plan 2023-24 with planned treatment commencing in September 2023.</li> <li><b>noted</b> NBC endorsed the Response Plan 2023-27 and full budget, and 2023-24 Work Plan followed by AMM approval and in-principle endorsement of the budget subject to jurisdictional budgetary processes on 13 July 2023.</li> <li>the release of the \$60.6 million bring forward was <b>noted</b>. Members were thanked for their involvement in enabling this to occur.</li> <li>NSW public commitment to the full funding within the Response Plan 2023-27 (Response Plan) was <b>noted</b>.</li> <li>changes to the reporting structure for the Communications and Engagement team who now report directly to the Program Executive was <b>noted</b>.</li> </ul>
	<b>Scientific Advisory Group Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>update was noted.</li> </ul>
	<b>RNAi Presentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>progress to date on the development of RNAi technology which has potential application to all exotic ant species was <b>noted</b> as was what is required to progress the technology to deliver a usable product for treating invasive ants, specifically the red imported fire ant (RIFA).</li> <li>Program funding of \$500 000 to CSIRO over two years for 2023-25 to progress development of RNAi as an innovative tool for RIFA eradication was <b>noted</b>.</li> </ul>
	<b>eDNA Presentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the current advances in the use of eDNA technology for detecting invasive ants was <b>noted</b>.</li> <li>members <b>discussed</b> the potential for the Program to pursue research into eDNA as a detection tool.</li> </ul>
	<b>Head of Operations Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the treatment and surveillance progress against the 2022-23 Work Plan was <b>noted</b> as was the amendments to the 2022-23 Work Plan.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the 2022-23 detections of importance were also <b>noted</b>.</li> </ul>
	<b>Risk Management Sub-Committee Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>update was <b>noted</b>.</li> </ul>
	<b>AgSOC / AMM Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the importance of a timely funding-partner agreement to provide the funding required to fully deliver the new Response Plan was <b>noted</b>.</li> </ul>
	<b>Work Plan 2023-24</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>members <b>noted</b> the status of the 2023-24 Work Plan and the significant implications of awaiting approval of the total amount of funding required for the new Response Plan 2023-27.</li> </ul>
	<b>FAST Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the progress on key issues and projects for FAST were <b>noted</b> as were the immediate priorities for FAST in the next two months.</li> </ul>
	<b>Financial Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the June 2023 Financial Performance Report, the transaction listing of payments made to date under the 10-Year Plan, and the reconciliation of prior year cost sharing apportionment payments were <b>noted</b>.</li> <li>the carry forward of the 2022-23 underspend of \$13 144 465 to fund the 2023-24 Work Plan was <b>approved</b>.</li> <li>members were requested to provide an estimation on timeframes for funding purposes.</li> </ul>
	<b>Remote Sensing Surveillance Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the verbal update regarding how the Program will utilise RSS into the future was <b>noted</b>.</li> <li>the approach to effectively apply remote sensing was <b>discussed</b> and <b>endorsed</b>.</li> </ul>
	<b>Legislative Responsibility (General Biosecurity Obligation)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the work being undertaken by the Program to enhance the legislative framework and the information regarding the general biosecurity obligation were <b>noted</b>.</li> </ul>
20 September 2023 (Extraordinary meeting)	<b>Program Executive Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members were reminded that the Program is currently working to the 2023-24 Work Plan until funding decisions have been approved and announced.</li> <li>the Program Executive reiterated that it is likely only one round of treatment will be completed this treatment season as this treatment can only occur if a funding decision is agreed to by October / November 2023.</li> <li>the Program Executive provided an update on briefings held with the Commonwealth, ACT Minister and NSW Minister and again welcomed invitations from the jurisdictions to brief their ministers if required.</li> <li>it was <b>noted</b> that approval for the Program's Response Plan 2023-27 budget has been delayed and alternate funding arrangements are required for 2023-24 to continue the eradication effort by the Program.</li> </ul>
	<b>Finance Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Program Executive advised that once NSW' contribution of the full response plan year one funding was received, the Program would come back to the Steering Committee to detail the changes that would be made within the 2023-24 Work Plan to reconcile the additional funding.</li> <li>it was <b>noted</b> that the timing of the contributions for 2023-24 will have a direct impact on sequencing of the scaling up to full capacity of the Program.</li> <li>Members <b>agreed</b> each contributing partner is to notify the Program of the anticipated timing of receipt of contributions for the 2023-24 financial year.</li> </ul>
	<b>2023-24 Work Plan and Treatment Variation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>members <b>noted</b> the treatment and surveillance progress against the 2023-24 Work Plan.</li> <li>the variation to the 2023-24 Work Plan except for the Minjerribah Response was <b>approved</b>.</li> <li>the recommended responses to the detections of importance were <b>approved</b>.</li> <li>it was <b>agreed</b> the Program would provide further options for the treatment of Minjerribah.</li> </ul>

	<b>General Biosecurity Obligations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>members <b>noted</b> the General Biosecurity Obligation (GBO) guidelines that are being developed by the Program under the Biosecurity Act 2014.</li> <li>members <b>discussed</b> the content of the guidelines which may be taken into account when considering whether a person has or has not discharged their GBO.</li> </ul>
10 November 2023 (Extraordinary meeting)	<b>Interim treatment on Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>members <b>approved</b> funding the next round of treatment for Minjerribah and the Bay Islands.</li> </ul>
22 November 2023	<b>Program Executive Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Program Executive advised an injunction had been served on the Program from a community member in the scenic rim which required a significant amount of work and resulted in the case being dismissed in the Supreme Court.</li> <li><b>noted</b> surveillance is currently ahead of the scheduled work in the 2023-24 Work Plan.</li> <li>the shortfall of approximately \$2.9 million due uncommitted funding in some jurisdictions was <b>noted</b>, as was the establishment of the NSW / QLD Cross Border Working Group.</li> </ul>
	<b>Variation #2 to 2023-24 Work Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>variation #2 to the 2023-24 Work Plan with the inclusion of additional funding provided by NSW was <b>discussed</b> and <b>approved</b>.</li> </ul>
	<b>Minjerribah Treatment Options</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the proposed Minjerribah treatment options were <b>discussed</b> and <b>approved</b>.</li> </ul>
	<b>Responsive Treatment Transition in the Suppression Area</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>members <b>noted</b> the current Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce (FAST) Plan 2022–2026 and aligned budget provided for a progressive transition of responsive treatment over the life of the project. FAST is now committing to accelerate the transition of responsive treatment from National Fire Ant Eradication Program (NFAEP) by 30 June 2024.</li> <li>it was also <b>noted</b> that the transition of responsive treatment will require FAST to complete a review of the FAST Plan 2022-2026 to determine if the current approach is effectively suppressing ants to aid in the eradication goal of the NFAEP.</li> <li><b>noted</b> the FAST is currently leading a responsive treatment transition plan in consultation with the (NFAEP) and will provide further details of a recommended model of a FAST-led responsive program once finalised. This plan will include self-treatment on land managed by local, state and federal government agencies, the public (residential and rural residential), primary producers and businesses.</li> <li>it was <b>noted</b> the 2021 independent review of the NFAEP recommended the responsibility for responsive treatment after community reports of fire ant nests be devolved from the NFAEP to local governments (Recommendation 21). This was supported by the NFAEP Steering Committee. The Queensland Government created the Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce in 2022 to facilitate landholder RIFA self-management in the suppression area.</li> </ul>
	<b>Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce (FAST) Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>update was <b>noted</b>.</li> </ul>
	<b>Risks and Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Approved</b> the Program’s request to enter into longer term contracts while funding decisions were still pending.</li> <li>members <b>discussed</b> the Program’s contingency plan principles and requested a working group be established to draft Terms of Reference for a transition to management or transition to containment.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Program's updated risks and issues register, and the Program's Quarterly Risk Report template were <b>noted</b>.</li> </ul>
	<b>Legislative Responsibility (General Biosecurity Obligations)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>it was <b>noted</b> the Policy team for the National Fire Ant Eradication Program (NFAEP) is progressing the Biosecurity Regulation amendments and General Biosecurity Obligation (GBO) guidelines, with assistance from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) staff. Steering Committee feedback in relation to the residential and industry guidelines have been incorporated and are currently out for industry consultation, including with the Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce members.</li> <li>members <b>noted</b> the proposed Biosecurity Regulation amendments will be done in two tranches. The first tranche will incorporate recommendations from the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) review and industry feedback and the second tranche will consider the outcomes from the national pest risk assessment currently assigned to the SMART.</li> <li>it was also <b>noted</b> there has been a delay in progressing the pest risk assessment for interstate trade and the Victorian SMART representative has recently taken over the facilitation of the assessment.</li> </ul>
	<b>Communications and Engagement Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>update was <b>noted</b>.</li> </ul>
21 December 2023 Out-of-Session request	<b>Re-operationalisation / validation of Remote Sensing Surveillance (RSS) FY23/24 – FY24/25</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>members <b>approved</b> to re-operationalise and validate the contribution of current-form, helicopter RSS to the Program during the 2024 surveillance season.</li> <li>Members <b>endorsed</b> the presentation of a detailed business case at the March 2024 RIFA NMG.</li> </ul>