

QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 1041
Asked on 16 June 2011

MRS ATTWOOD asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies (MR MULHERIN)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister provide an update in relation to the eradication of fire ants in South East Queensland?

ANSWER:

The Red Imported Fire Ant is an immediate and significant threat to our way of life, environment and economy.

The National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program delivered by Biosecurity Queensland continues to eradicate and contain fire ant infestation to areas of South East Queensland.

The program has ensured that the predicted significant impact of fire ant has not occurred, and it has greatly reduced the level of fire ant infestation in Queensland from that seen at the start of the program.

Of the 110 000 hectares in the restricted area, approximately 400 hectares have confirmed infestation.

In 2010–11, the national fire ant program focussed on proactively managing the risk of fire ant spread outside known areas. Extensive community engagement, targeted surveillance and treatment of over 83 000 hectares has reduced the risk of fire ant spread into high-risk areas.

More than 35 percent of detections this year were made as a result of reports made by the general public, highlighting the importance of the public to the eradication program through reporting and adhering to movement controls.

The formal declaration of eradication of fire ants from Yarwun in December 2010 shows we have the tools, the science and the capability to eradicate fire ants from Queensland.

The long-term focus of the program remains firmly on the goal of eradication.

In 2011-12, the Queensland Government is investing an additional \$6 million on top of the national cost shared \$15 million budget. This additional investment highlights the Queensland Government's ongoing commitment to protect Queensland's economy, environment and way of life from these invasive pests.

A cost benefit analysis suggests an impact in the order of \$43 billion over the next 30 years should fire ant be left unchecked.