

Question on Notice

No. 189

Asked on 26 February 2019

MR J MADDEN ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the Fire Ant Eradication program—

Will the Minister advise what action the Palaszczuk Government is taking to keep the community informed?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

On behalf of every government in Australia, the Queensland Government is co-ordinating a national effort to eradicate fire ants.

The Fire Ant Program conducts extensive community engagement and educational activities to increase awareness of fire ants across South East Queensland and encourages participation in the efforts to eradicate them. These activities include:

- regular fire ant awareness training sessions for council and industry
- school education program ‘Aka the Fire Ant Tracker’ for Prep – Grade 6 students
- staffed displays at local community hubs such as shopping centres, events, expos and libraries to answer questions from residents
- signage placed on prominent roads
- mobile static displays in council libraries and community centres, rotated on a 3-4 week basis
- key messages distributed through media and social media channels
- council and community groups encouraged to distribute messages through their networks.

In the fire ant treatment season, the Program runs a dedicated communication and engagement campaign to inform residents within the targeted treatment areas. This includes:

- information flyers delivered to residential letterboxes via Australia post
- print, radio and social media advertising
- providing information to council, community groups and schools to distribute through their networks
- residents of properties that are targeted for aerial treatment are contacted directly by program officers prior to treatment to discuss and plan the treatment process and to complete a Treatment Information Form
- signage is placed in the surrounding area at the time of treatment to notify residents that aerial bait treatment is taking place in the neighbourhood.

The program also responds with community engagement activities based on emerging operational requirements or community need. The methods and tools used to engage varies depending on the community and the key messages that are required to be disseminated.

Recently, a community forum was held in the Lockyer Valley to address concerns from local residents about the treatment activities in their area. The event provided the opportunity for residents to speak to Program specialists who could answer their specific concerns and queries relating to the Program's activities in the Lockyer Valley.

The Program has established three collaboration groups and commenced discussion with council, industry and community members. The groups were developed to discuss the measures that may assist in reporting, treating and eradicating fire ants and how to effectively manage fire ant risks.