

Question on Notice

No. 1167

Asked on 26 October 2022

MR R KATTER ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES AND MINISTER FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to Queensland's approximately six million-strong feral pig population, which poses catastrophic risk to our nation should a local outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease occur— Will the Minister outline what efforts have been made to allocate adequate funding to necessary aerial shooting and bounty hunting programs and subsidised boar-busting traps and poisons needed to reduce the population?

ANSWER:

Existing research suggests that feral pigs are unlikely to play a significant role in maintaining and spreading foot-and-mouth disease in Northern Australia due to a number of factors, including climatic conditions and feral pig population density.

However, feral pigs remain a potential risk that needs to be considered and will be subject to a risk assessment to ensure they are fully considered in any emergency animal disease eradication program.

In the case of an emergency response, feral animal control activities would be strategically targeted based on the response-specific scenario and guided by the principles outlined in the relevant nationally-agreed Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan (AUSVETPLAN) disease strategy and supporting documents.

The Palaszczuk Government has provided \$22 million to boost Queensland's frontline defences against emergency animal disease outbreaks such as foot-and-mouth disease. As part of this, \$3.474 million has been identified to be used for innovation and diversification of feral pig management covering:

- a. \$2.163 million to fund up to four regionally based feral pig management coordinators over a three-year period;
- b. \$1 million grants program, inviting applications for innovative research and development projects to drive effective and enhanced feral pig management, development or improvement of control tools or improved methods for their utilisation.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries does not pay any bounties for pest animals or support the introduction of bounties for pest animal management, including broad scale feral pig control in Queensland. This policy is informed by studies indicating that bounties usually result in no appreciable reduction in the number of pest animals, can be counter-productive to more efficient, longer-term options and utilise resources better spent elsewhere.

While foot-and-mouth disease is not present in Australia, landholders are encouraged to maintain ongoing feral animal management activities to suppress the feral pig population on their land to fulfil their general biosecurity obligation. Effective feral pig control requires the use of integrated, cross-tenure collaborative control activities, combined with appropriate land management practices.