

Question on Notice

No. 112

Asked on Thursday, 15 March 2024

MR M BERKMAN asked the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the euthanising of a male Tiger Shark at Kings Beach, Caloundra on 20 December 2023—

Will the Minister advise (a) how the shark was euthanised under permitted practices of the Shark Control Program, (b) if similar practices have been recorded over the past 12 months, (c) if the department has conducted an investigation and if so, what was the outcome, including any enforcement, (d) the explanation if no investigation was conducted and (e) if the incident was reported to animal welfare authorities such as the RSPCA?

ANSWER:

Successive governments have recognised the vital role the Shark Control Program plays in protecting human life at popular beaches, which attract tourists from all over the world. The Queensland Government always puts the safety of people first. We are committed to reviewing and adapting the Shark Control Program in line with emerging science and technology. However, we will not make changes until alternatives are tested and proven effective for Queensland conditions.

Outside of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP), target shark species are euthanised using a method known as pithing or brain spiking. A powerhead or firearm may be used by contractors who are appropriately licenced on rare occasions. These methods are accepted as best practice for euthanising large sharks in the field, as the animal is euthanised as quickly and humanely as possible. This standard procedure is performed routinely in the Shark Control Program (including over the last 12 months), outside of the GBRMP.

Officers from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, along with an independent expert in shark euthanasia techniques, have reviewed the footage. Although I understand this may be distressing for some people, the procedure followed by the shark contractor was correct and the shark was dispatched quickly. Postmortem muscle tremors are common after pithing and may be mistaken for the animal still being alive.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) is responsible for investigating animal welfare complaints under the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001*. The RSPCA referred information about the euthanasia of a shark on 20 December 2023 to DAF for investigation. DAF's review of this incident and the available information and scientific advice concluded that no further action is required and the matter is now considered closed.