

AUGUST 2018

STEERING COMMITTEE WORKSHOP SUMMARY



NATIONAL RED IMPORTED FIRE ANT
ERADICATION PROGRAM SOUTH
EAST QUEENSLAND



Queensland
Government

Document approval

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Without an eradication program,
the **impacts of fire ants** will surpass
the combined effects of **many of**
the pests we currently regard as
Australia's worst invasives (rabbits,
cane toads, foxes, camels, wild dogs
and feral cats)

Introduction

Background

The red imported fire ant (fire ant) is a pest of national significance that has a significant impact on wildlife, the environment, agriculture, animal industries, infrastructure, business, human health, not to mention the Australian way of life. All Australian jurisdictions have a vested interest in eradicating the pest as the impacts are far reaching across multiple sectors of the economy and community.

The National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program (the National Program) in South East Queensland (SEQ) has been operational since 2001 in response to the discovery of fire ants in Western Brisbane and Fisherman Islands. The implementation of the National Program has prevented the widespread environmental, social, health and economic impacts seen in other countries where fire ant has invaded.

The National Program continues to progress the eradication of the fire ant under the nationally endorsed *Ten Year Eradication Plan – National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program – South East Queensland 2017–18 to 2026–27* (the Ten Year Plan).

The Ten Year Plan revolves around the concept of priority target areas (1–4). Each area will progress through phases that contribute to the overall objectives of the Ten Year Plan supported by an annual work plan. There are three general phases:

- Phase one (search and suppress);
- Phase two (treat); and
- Phase three (search and clear).

The 2017–18 Work Plan focused on commencing eradication treatment in Area 1 and conducting targeted surveillance surrounding and beyond this area to limit the potential for undetected infestation to impact upon this broad scale treatment regime. All other program activities were built around supporting this focus.

The delivery of the Ten Year Plan is underpinned by robust governance arrangements which ensure program transparency and progress toward the attainment of National Program goals. The National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program – South East Queensland Steering Committee (the Steering

Committee) monitors progress and performance through the review of key program progress reports.

Overview of the Steering Committee

The Steering Committee was established by the Agriculture Ministers' Forum in July 2017 to provide strategic oversight to the 10-year National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program in South East Queensland (the Program).

The Steering Committee consists of senior Commonwealth and interstate biosecurity representatives and provides guidance and support to the Program's operational team on all aspects of the Program's delivery to ensure that it has the best chance of achieving its objectives.

The Steering Committee has responsibility over:

- Providing leadership and guidance to the Program's operational team.
- Approving of the fire ant eradication plan and detailed annual work plans.
- Overseeing the implementation of the fire ant eradication plan, and providing direction on issues arising as deemed necessary.
- Making decisions in relation to program budget matters (within the agreed program budget).
- Monitoring and evaluating program performance and progress.
- Monitoring program risks and mitigation strategies.
- Approving national communication activities e.g. national talking points.
- Guiding the investigation of alternate sources of program funding.
- Receiving and approving reports on program progress.
- Reporting on the progress of the program.

Introduction

August Workshop (Meeting No. 5)

The Steering Committee met for the fifth time on the 22nd August 2018. This follows the inaugural meeting in July 2017 and subsequent meetings in November 2017, February 2018 and May 2018.

The August 2018 meeting also included a Steering Committee workshop to consider risks and issues and provide direction to inform the Program's 2018-19 Work Plan. This included reflecting on infestation and treatment outcomes in 2017-18.

The workshop was attended by members of the Steering Committee, representatives of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and officers from the National Program.

The purpose of the full-day workshop was to:

- Critically evaluate progress delivering the National Program for South East Queensland.
- Explore emerging Program implementation risks and issues, consider appropriate response strategies, and seek Steering Committee guidance on key areas of potential improvement.
- Decide whether the progress of the program should trigger a notification to the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC).

Purpose of this document

This report provides a high-level summary on outcomes from the workshop and key recommended refinements to the National Program. In particular:

- A summary of key results from 2017-18;
- Key areas for improvement or action identified based on program learnings to date;
- A summary of decisions and recommendations from the workshop;
- The alignment of activities with the strategies outlined in the Ten Year Plan; and
- An outline of the process and schedule for reviewing the Program.



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2017-18 performance

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The Steering Committee **noted progress** over the **first 12 months** of the 2017-18 to 2026-27 Ten Year Eradication Plan, in which the Program has achieved a **significant increase in eradication and treatment activity**

Summary of key results 2017-18

We have continued to successfully deliver against the Ten Year Plan, increasing our efforts to respond to the threat of the fire ant.

The Program has **significantly increased** its eradication activity with treatment coverage increasing from 97,500 hectares in 2016-17 to a total of 196,500 hectares in 2017-18.

This included finalising two 84,000 hectare rounds of eradication treatment in the west of the operational area and 28,500 hectares of suppression treatment designed to slow the spread of the ant in areas not yet subject to the eradication treatment phase.

Denied or delayed property entry, low ground soil temperatures, wet weather (49 lost days), contract staff continuity and other operational constraints were factors that impacted treatment and limited the overall volume and areas of treatment.

After the completion of two rounds of treatment, the combination of aerial baiting and other measures in the west of the operational area (Area 1) is **impacting on the ants**. There is anecdotal evidence of **fewer nests, in-breeding** and **reduced vitality** within nests. While scientific verification is needed, these results are promising considering up to six rounds of treatment is expected to be required to achieve final results.

Continuing the broad strategy of the ten year plan to progressively eradicate west to east **remains viable**.



190,000

Hectares Treated

as a part of planned baiting

↑ 95%

increase

from 2016-17

75%

of target

for 2017-18



21,415

Nests Treated

with Direct Nest Injection (DNI)

↑ 79%

increase

from 2016-17

89%

of budget

for 2017-18



534

Compliance Checks

95% compliance with
biosecurity control measures

↑ 734%

increase

from 2016-17



4,500

Hectares Surveyed

as a part of planned
surveillance

↑ 165%

increase

from 2016-17

45%

of target

for 2017-18



9

Significant Detections

identified outside of the Program
operational area



↑ 27%

Increase in public referrals

Genetic analyses and scientific research

We continue to grow our understanding of the fire ant, to evaluate our performance and identify opportunities to help reduce costs, improve efficacy and enhance the efficiency of the Program.



Genetic Testing

The Program continues to use genetic testing and research to ensure the delivery of the Program is evidence based.

The capacity to use genetics to better understand fire ant populations (including their structure, relatedness and spread patterns) and the potential contribution of genetic bottlenecks to eradication efforts represents a significant tool in supporting the eradication and suppression of the fire ant.

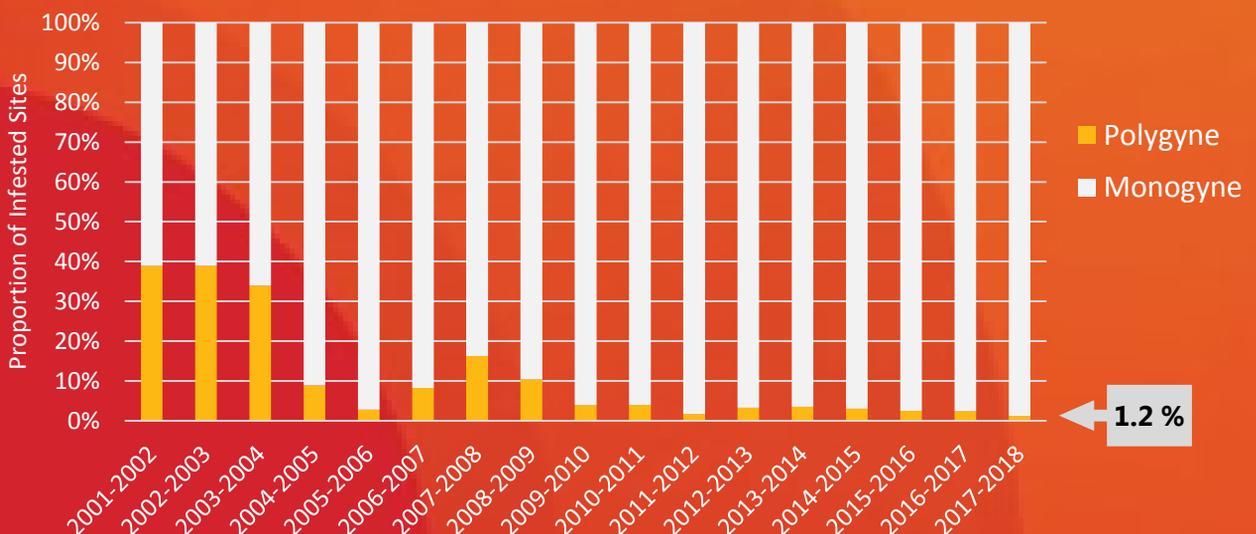
It is important to note that there are two distinct forms of nests being:

- Monogyne – A low density nest containing a single queen, highly territorial in nature; and
- Polygyne – A high density nest containing multiple related queens co-habiting.

Polygyne represent a greater risk due to both the higher density of ants and the chance of moved material containing a queen. These populations are also harder to eradicate due to the chance that a queen may escape. Polygyne populations also represent an opportunity for increased genetic diversity with a large number of interacting queens capable of transferring genetic material, including breeding with monogyne males.

Insights from the ongoing genetic analyses including in relation to distribution, characteristics and treatment implications for the two fire ant social forms (Monogyne or Polygyne) continue to provide a valuable evidence base which is used to inform the ongoing refinement of program activity.

As shown in the graph below, there is a significant reduction in the proportion of Polygyne nests in infested sites since 2001. Currently this is sitting at 1.2 per cent of infested sites. Reduction in diversity is ideal for eradication of a species and is associated with a pathway of lessening adaptability and reduced resistance to environmental factors, including competition from other species. Indicators of reduced genetic diversity are also consistent with the emerging evidence of fewer nests, in-breeding and reduced vitality within nests observed in the field (Area 1).



Key activities in 2017-18

Eradication treatment

Operational implementation commenced part way through the fire ant treatment season in October 2017.

The Program achieved a significant ramping up of activity and completed two of three planned rounds of treatment for 2017-18 in Area 1. Each round of treatment involved a combination of aerial and ground baiting of an insect growth regulator over approximately 84,000 hectares of suitable habitat.

The planned third treatment round for 2017-18 was deferred in part due to delays in establishing additional treatment teams but predominately because of higher than average wet weather which prevented the application of bait.

A total of nine infestations have been detected outside the operational boundary during 2017-18. Having been treated, these are now subject to surveillance to confirm they have been destroyed.

Preventing human-assisted spread

Recruitment of additional compliance officers commenced in the second half of 2017-18. A total of 534 compliance checks (up from 64 in the previous year) were undertaken in 2017-18, resulting in the identification of three instances of serious non-compliance, which have all since been resolved.

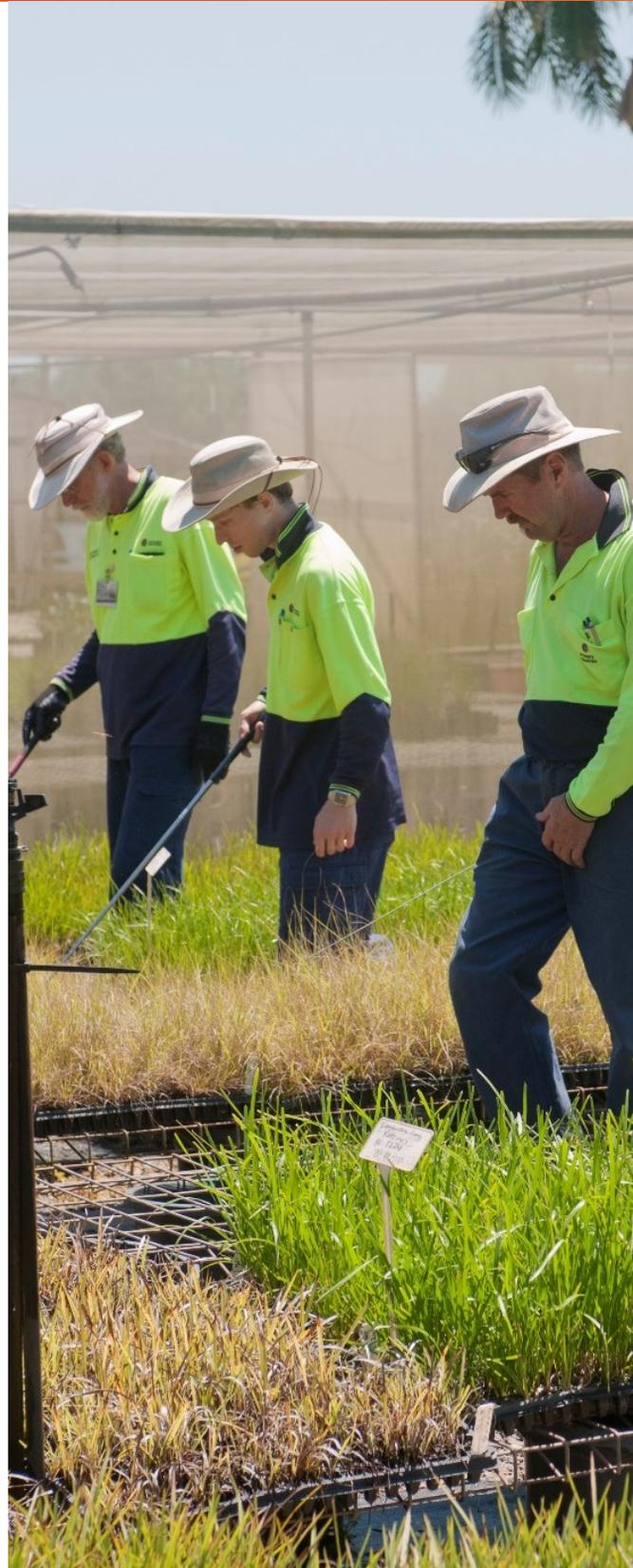
Community and stakeholder engagement

Communication and stakeholder engagement plays an integral role in raising awareness and encouraging participation amongst the various target audiences to permit treatment activities to occur and support community involvement in the reporting of ants and non compliant activity.

In 2017-18, a total of 15,227 people were engaged through community, school and industry initiatives; in part driving a 27 per cent increase in public referrals of suspect ants.

A key outcome for stakeholder engagement has been increasing treatment efficacy through encouraging owners and occupiers to not disturb their land immediately post treatment.

Additionally, the Program has engaged directly with 15,227 people through its community, school and industry initiatives.



Key activities in 2017-18

Community engagement

Complementing the program activities, communication and stakeholder engagement was integral to achieving increased public reports of suspected fire ants.

A total of 5,674 reports of fire ants by the public resulted in 3,260 samples received for scientific diagnosis over the year to date. Of these, 65 per cent were positively identified as fire ants. This high level of accuracy by the public of identifying fire ants demonstrates increasing public awareness.

Science

Scientific assessment is also important in determining treatment efficacy and supports the management of infestation or spread risks (for example those created by human assisted movement within key development corridors). Analysis continued to be undertaken to determine the relatedness of nests and movement of infestations. This has helped to identify the source of new infestations, track key spread patterns and recognise and manage the reinfestation of existing treated sites.

Governance and Administration

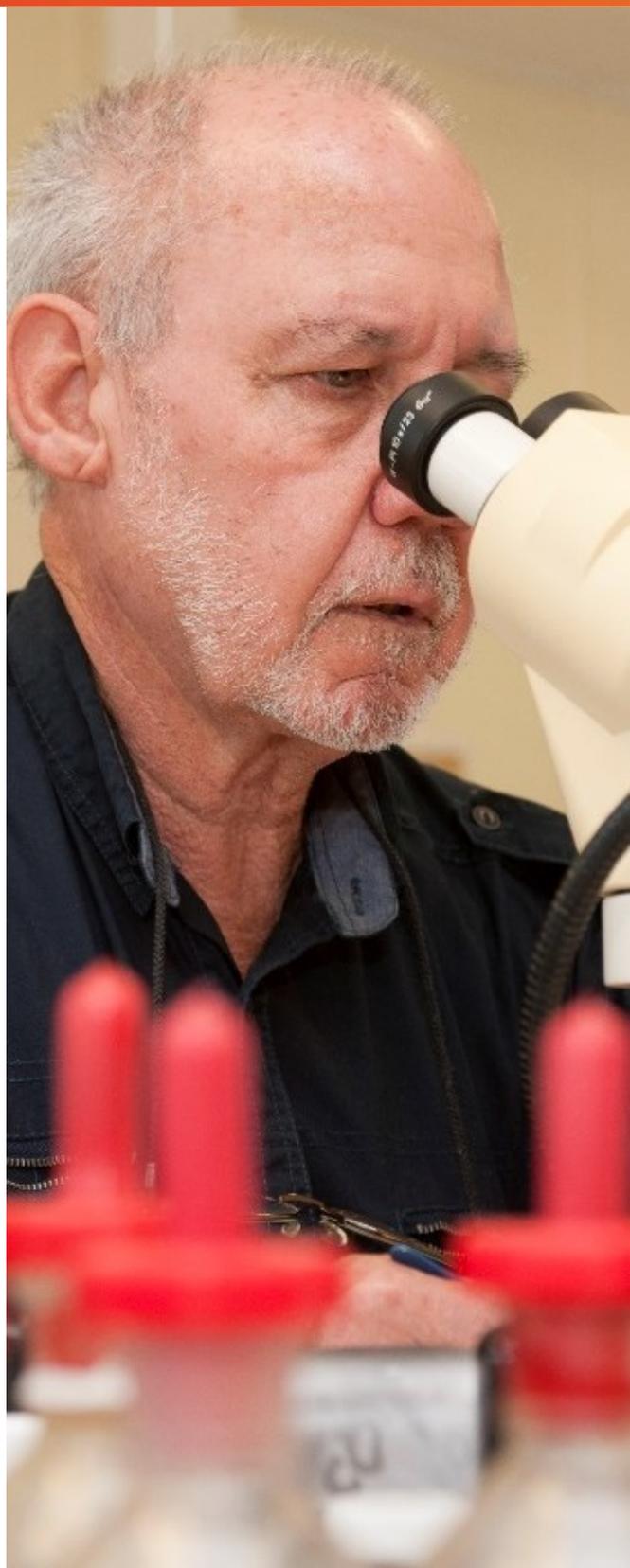
Improving administrative and information systems to keep pace with the increased level and scale of the program has been a challenge.

Auditing of Program controls and business processes has been commissioned to identify improvements. Key performance indicators also need to be reviewed to ensure measures of efficiency and effectiveness critical to a larger scale operation are in place.

Funding certainty has also provided the opportunity to achieve savings by migrating to longer term supply contracts in areas such as vehicle fleet leasing.

Relocation to new premises at Berrinba will see the consolidation of staff from Richlands and Moggill sites into a single location that supports the operational needs both now and into the future as eradication efforts shifts from the west to the east. The movement of staff will be finalised in October 2018.

The Program has also worked to implement a new staffing profile. Key senior roles are now filled. Securing, training and retaining sufficient field staff has also been a focus. Recruitment was phased across the year and has resulted in an additional 138 people being recruited in 2017-18.



Current planned initiatives

The Program continues to explore opportunities to reduce costs, improve efficacy and efficiency to support the delivery of the Ten Year Plan.

There are a number of key initiatives that are being explored by the Program for introduction within the 2018-19 period including those outlined below.



Introduction of the Skip-Swath Method

The skip-swath method of aerial application will support a reduction in the cost base of aerial suppression treatment during 2018-19

The skip-swath method of aerial application is where every second length of aerial spray is 'skipped' or missed of a treatment area. All edges of the treatment boundary will still have bait applied; (i.e. no skipped length on the edge, nor an open end of a parcel). This method relies on the ants travelling out 10 meters to forage for food. This method has been used in the USA with no reduction in efficacy. Subject to *validating its efficacy*, it is planned that the skip-swath method will be used in areas for suppression treatment only and will lead to a reduction in program costs relating to aerial suppression.



Self-treatment by industry and community

Providing opportunities for targeted industry and community self-treatment within non-eradication treatment areas only

Eradication requires all levels of the community and industry to collaborate around the location and treatment of fire ants. This includes actively managing the risk of human assisted movement of ants from one location to another. An important factor in compliance with biosecurity obligations is the need to address infestations and potential movement efficiently and effectively; ensuring minimal disruption to activity, particularly industry and development projects.

The Program will explore the potential for residents and industry to report and self-treat red imported fire ants (outside of active eradication areas, currently Area 1) including:

- Through the use of licenced pest management technicians;
- Treatment by developers and other landowners to facilitate reduced project delays;
- Collaboration with local governments in respect of planning instruments, first response treatment in public spaces, surveillance and leveraging the on ground knowledge of community environment groups; and
- Collaboration with large industry, public utilities and government agencies delivering large infrastructure.



Selective treatment of high density residential sites

Using selective treatment responses in high-density residential areas to maximise resources for suppressing and eradicating the fire ant in higher risk locations.

The actual cost of treating high density residential areas per hectare is relatively high. In addition the risk of a nest being undetected in a high-density residential area is considered to be lower due to a reduced area of suitable habitat and greater public visibility. Through selective treatment of high density residential sites it is intended that efforts can be further concentrated in high-risk locations including developmental corridors, large habitat areas and areas of low public visibility.

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Key risks and emerging issues

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The Steering Committee continues to **review the approach** to delivering the Ten Year Plan noting **several key risks and issues** identified during 2017-18 that **impact on the eradication** of the fire ant

Detections outside the operational area

KEY RISK 1: Detections outside the operational area:



RISK:

There have been nine (9) significant detections outside of the operational area in 2017-18.

The two year lag between the program review and delimiting exercise in 2015 and implementation of the new eradication program in 2017 has afforded an opportunity for the ants to spread beyond the then known limits of infestation. As a result, eradication treatment has not captured the full extent of the infestation. Continuing development and human assisted movement exacerbate the spread risk.

While low in number, the detections outside the operational area suggest it is prudent to undertake an eradication effort beyond the current treatment boundaries as 'insurance' against further spread, particularly in the west and in the Brisbane and Gold Coast corridor.

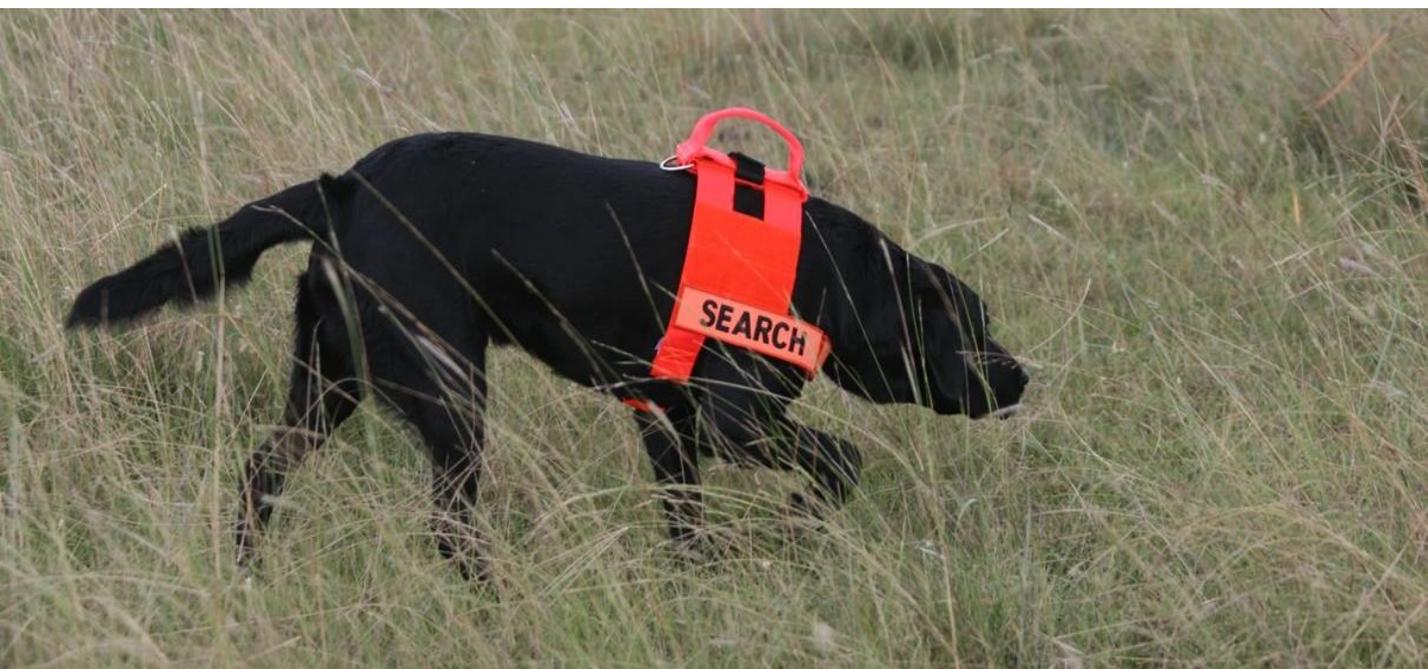


RESPONSE:

In response to the recent detections outside the treatment boundary around the western, north-eastern and south-eastern operational boundary, the Steering Committee has endorsed a broad scale eradication treatment at key risk locations outside the treatment area. This approach is further justified by the detection of a further six (6) infestations in close proximity since the start of July 2018.

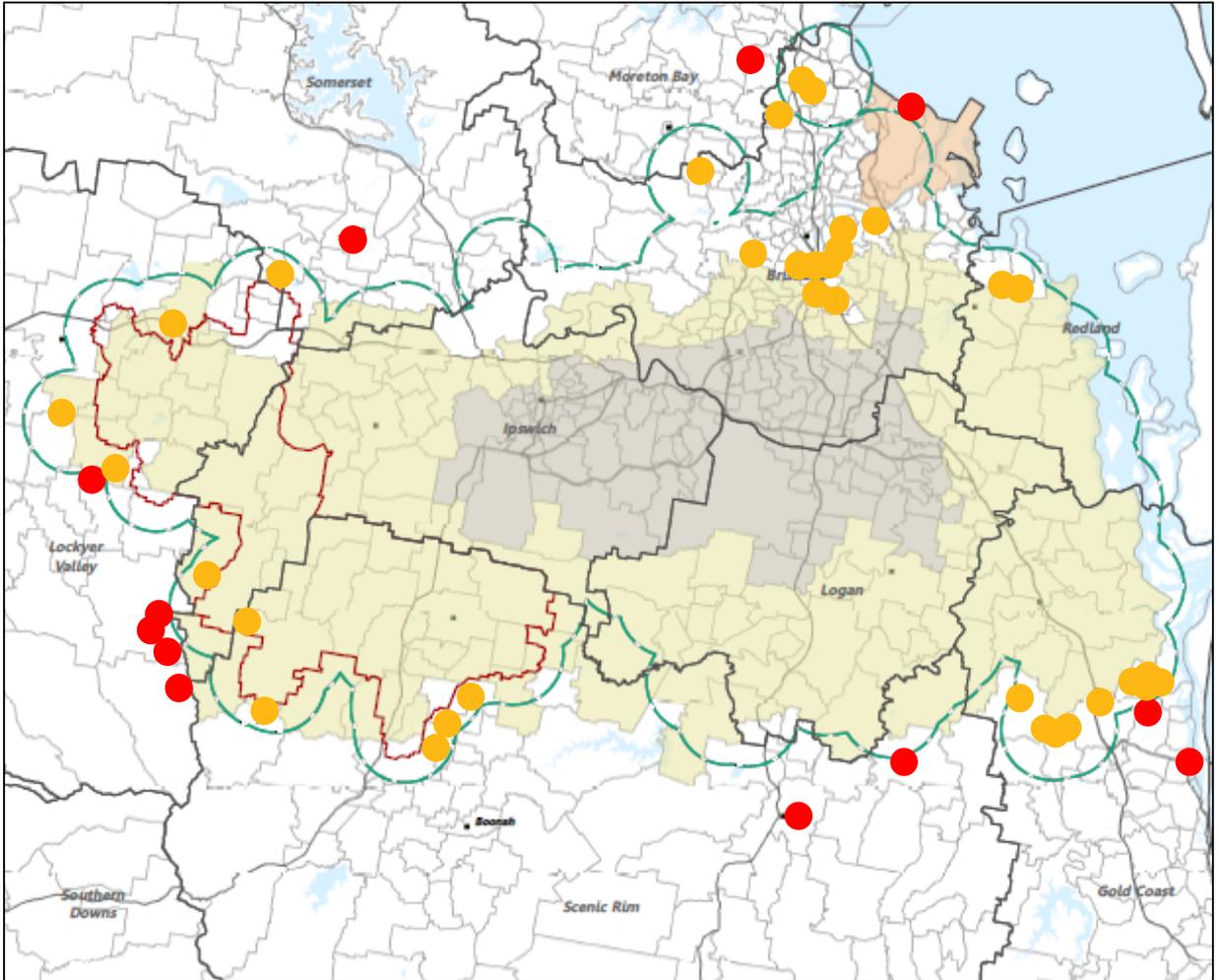
The option of proactively treating (primarily by broad scale aerial baiting) an area 5km beyond the recorded infestations will be the primary response.

It is noted that such treatment may have significant budget implications in terms of both current and future year cash flows and may require some adjustment to the timing of funding.



Detections outside the operational area

DETECTIONS OUTSIDE BIOSECURITY ZONES AROUND AREA 1-4 2017-18 (as at September 2018)



LEGEND

- Area 1 eradication treatment area 2017-18
- Operational Boundary 2017-18
- Fire ant biosecurity zone 1
- Fire ant biosecurity zone 2
- Fire ant biosecurity zone 3
- Local Government Areas
- Suburb
- Detections outside Biosecurity Zones
- Significant Detections 2017-18 and 2018-19 (as at September 2018)



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Key development corridors

KEY RISK 2: Managing Development Corridors:



RISK:

There is a strong correlation between infestation and development, particularly the corridor from Brisbane to the Gold Coast and the development belt West of Ipswich are particular risks.

Activity in this corridor, incorporating the local authorities of Brisbane, Redlands, Logan and Gold Coast, is creating ideal habitat and high potential for human assisted movement as carrier materials including from movement of soil, machinery and landscaping matter are transported. Past flooding in the Logan region and continuing infrastructure development has also likely increased the density/footprint of infestation.

Genetic testing has established that infestations have likely 'leapfrogged' from Richlands (Brisbane) to Pimpama through human assisted movement; enabling further spread to Hope Island, Labrador, Southport and Wongawallan. Collaboration with industry to improve compliance with biosecurity obligations and limit the risk of human assisted movement is vital.

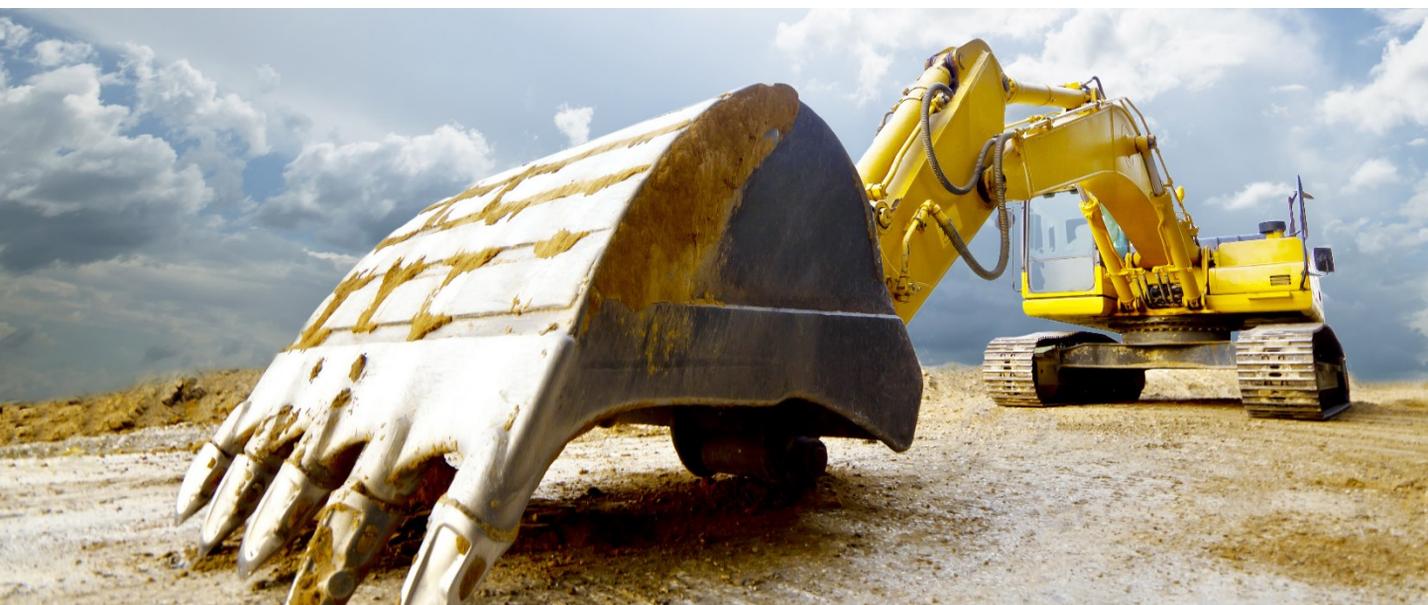
Suppression across the corridor (hampered by rain and other factors) was less than required in 2017-18. Suppression also needs to be enhanced to contain spread and address infestation hot spots.



RESPONSE:

The Steering Committee endorsed a focused effort on key development corridor areas. The Gold Coast, Logan and Redland Councils will be engaged to develop and implement a 'tailored' response to address concerns.

The Program will also enhance surveillance and suppression responses in development hotspots across the area of infestation, particularly in the west of the infestation area.



Key development corridors

CORRELATION - RESIDENTIAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (as at August 2018)



LEGEND

- + Colony Points (01 Jul 2017- 01 Aug 2018)
- Operational Boundary
- Development Areas
- Local Government Area



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Managing public reporting

KEY RISK 3: Managing public reports of suspected fire ants



RISK:

Public 'eyes on the ground' and reports of suspect ants is essential to the eradication effort, particularly in highly urbanised areas where broad hectare aerial baiting is not always able to be applied.

Following reporting, effort is made to confirm the report is in fact fire ant and then a treatment response (baiting, direct nest injection, etc.) is determined and scheduled. Actual treatment is prioritised against other reports considering risk, location, time of year, and other factors. In some instances, the prioritisation against other reports means that property owners are sometime waiting for extended periods for a response.

Reflecting efforts to better inform and communicate information about fire ants and the work of the Program, there has been a 27 per cent increase in public reporting of suspect ants in 2017-18. In response, the number and hours of field officers has been increased to achieve around 179 per cent increase in responsive treatments by direct nest injection from 12,000 in 2016-17 to 21,000 over the past year. Notwithstanding this effort, improving response timeframes, 'customer service' and exploration of alternative response options is considered essential.



RESPONSE:

As well as continuing current response effort, the Steering Committee endorsed:

- Action in 2018-19 to address 'hotspot' infestation with high reporting and spread potential;
- Increasing resources to improve both treatment response times and progress feedback using the new online public portal (CRM system);
- Exploring with the Australian Environmental Pest Management Association (AEPMA) the prospect of using licensed pest providers as a privately funded supplement to Program efforts; and
- Exploring the viability of property owners 'self-treating'.



Addressing human assisted movement

KEY RISK 4: Addressing human assisted movement



RISK:

The high rate of development and farming present a high risk of human assisted transportation of fire ant carrier material to areas outside the fire ant biosecurity zones.

A more assertive regulatory stance, underpinned by efforts to increase both public awareness and collaboration across industry and local Government is needed to reduce the risk of human assisted spread and failure to report suspect ants. Fire ant biosecurity zones also need to be reviewed to ensure they are aligned to the extent of risk.



RESPONSE:

The Steering Committee noted an increase in the number of compliance checks by 734 per cent and endorsed the following actions to address the impact of human assisted movement:

- Updating the fire ant biosecurity zones to match the infestation extent.
- Collaboration with local, state and federal governments and representative organisations (including LGAQ, SEQCOM, and Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning) to make control of fire ant risk a condition of development approval.
- Assessing the value of an industry accreditation scheme – a star rating of businesses implementing risk mitigation measures to inform consumer choice and provide commercial incentive for compliance.
- Developing a public awareness 'eyes on the ground' campaign; underlining a message that everyone has a role to play in eradicating fire ants.
- Targeting high risk industries (including: soil, hay, nursery products, mulch and turf).



Shortfall in program funding

KEY RISK 5: Timing of Program Funding



RISK:

Funding across the ten years of the Program has been allocated equally (flat lined) each year at around \$38 million (adjusted for inflation). This does not correlate to the timing and extent of eradication effort, particularly in the early years of the Program. The responses to the issues considered in the workshop highlight the challenge and limitations of delivering the program based using a flat lined budget. While there is confidence that the Program will remain within the overall funding allocation of \$411 million, there is a need to adjust the cash flow of the program to align with effort.

While the preference is to manage within existing annual allocations, this should not be at the expense of eradication outcomes. At the end of the first year of eradication a clearer picture of eradication effort and timing is emerging; enabling the cash flow for the Program to be reconsidered.

It is evident that the staged eradication moving from Area 1 across to Area 4 will require a front end weighted effort and a corresponding higher allocation of funds within the earlier years of treatment. Equally, a decrease in project spend requirements in the latter years is expected as the treatment area is reduced and remote sensing surveillance is established. Any adjustment to the timing of funds will require cross jurisdictional agreement and adjustment to the forward estimates of the respective funding jurisdictions.



RESPONSE:

The Steering Committee reviewed the current circumstances and agreed the Program remains viable within the overall \$411 million budget. While the Steering Committee identified a preference for the 2018-19 project spend to remain within the established budget; it was acknowledged that this was unlikely to align with the eradication effort. Consequently, the Steering Committee also endorsed the development of a more detailed and most effective plan and budget (cash flow requirements) forecast in line with expected activity. The budget is to remain within the ten year budget of \$411 million. The amount of adjustment to the annual forward estimates will be determined when planning is complete, costed and endorsed by the Steering Committee. However, initial estimates show that the adjustment in 2018-19 may be in the order of \$10-12 million.



3

Review of program triggers

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The **Steering Committee** determined a **notification to the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC) concerning a threat to Program objectives** was **not necessary** at this stage

Assessment against program triggers

Overview of program triggers

The Ten Year Plan outlines triggers (detailed in table below) that would necessitate an assessment by the Steering Committee that the NBC should be notified of a threat to the National Program objectives. Evaluation of performance against these triggers continues to be undertaken by the Steering Committee in conjunction with the Program to identify if a program trigger has occurred.

Key Program Triggers			
#	Assumption	Trigger	Reporting mechanism
1	The pest is delimited	There is a new infestation discovered outside the current operational area	Significant detection report forwarded to the Steering Committee
2	Techniques for destruction of the pest are effective	There is a detection of the pest on a site that was deemed no longer infested following completion of clearance protocols, and there is evidence that the detection is a remnant infestation rather than a reinfestation	Significant detection report forwarded to the Steering Committee
3	Response plan costs are as budgeted	The cost of delivering the Ten Year Plan activities exceeds the proposed indicative budget for the National Program (over the life of the plan)	Monthly, quarterly, half-yearly and annual reports to the Steering Committee
4	Response plan timeframes are as estimated	Response timeframes exceed those specified in the Ten Year Plan	Annual reports to the Steering Committee
5	Milestones can be achieved within the scope of the response plan	Program milestones are not being achieved	Annual reports to the Steering Committee

Assessment against program triggers

Outcome of performance review against program triggers

During the workshop, the Steering Committee noted progress over the first 12 months of the Ten Year Plan and determined a trigger had not been met and therefore a notification to the NBC concerning a threat to Program objectives **was not necessary at this stage. It was agreed however a report to the NBC from the Steering Committee will be submitted.**

#	TRIGGER	STATUS
1	The pest is delimited	<p>Infestation has been discovered outside the current operational area however proposed treatment is appropriate to ensure containment</p> <p>However, the recent significant detections suggest that improved proactive and reactive surveillance measures implemented in the first 12 months of the Program are effective at detecting new infestations within and beyond the declared operational boundary.</p> <p>The Program has proposed proactively treating (primarily by broad scale aerial baiting) an area 5km beyond the recorded infestations in order to treat infestations discovered outside the current operational area.</p>
2	Techniques for destruction of the pest are effective	<p>Current techniques appear to be effective however due to early program maturity these will continue to be considered against emerging evidence</p> <p>Based on the best available information, existing treatment methods (including surveillance, monitoring, baiting, direct nest injection etc.) appear to be effective. Continuing evidence-based improvement in all treatment activities remains a high Program priority. This includes aggressively pursuing opportunities for improved efficacy and reduced costs (for overall eradication cost, unit cost per treatment, and opportunity cost). Continuous improvement and an adaptive management mindset were fundamental requirements to successfully delivering the 10-year eradication plan.</p>
3	Response plan costs are as budgeted	<p>Estimated cost of delivery exceeds the annual budget (not over the life of the plan)</p> <p>Proposed changes in strategic direction (to include broad scale treatment of "outlying infestations") will require significant changes to be reflected in the 2018-19 work plan, including potential delays in treatment of lower risk sites within the containment areas. Once developed and operational, the proposed involvement of third party providers and industry and government collaboration partners to treat infested sites could compensate for any treatment delays by the Program in the short term. However there remains a need to consider the re-negotiating of the phasing of funding to better align with required treatment activity.</p>

Assessment against program triggers

4	<p>Response plan timeframes are as estimated</p>	<p>Key medium and long-term milestones in the 10 Year Plan are expected to be achieved.</p> <p>Progress against established KPIs will be monitored by the Steering Committee at their quarterly meetings to ensure the Program remains on track.</p> <p>There are some noted potential short-term delays arising from the recent significant detections and the need to address emerging issues. These responses may slow progression east of Area 1 for a period. However key medium and long-term milestones in the 10 Year Plan are expected to be achieved.</p>
5	<p>Milestones can be achieved within the scope of the response plan</p>	<p>Key medium and long-term milestones in the 10 Year Plan are expected to be achieved.</p> <p>Overall, notwithstanding some potential short-term delays arising from the recent significant detections, key medium and long-term milestones in the 10 Year Plan are expected to be achieved. Progress against established KPIs will be monitored by the Steering Committee at their quarterly meetings to ensure the Program remains on track.</p>

4

Our agreed response

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As an outcome of the August Workshop the Steering Committee **approved a number of key action items** including the development of a more **detailed plan and budget** to support the Program in 2018-19 and beyond

Identified areas for improvement

10 areas for improvement were identified during the workshop in relation to the delivery of the Program. These areas have informed the agreed actions from the workshop and will inform the development of the Work Plan for 2018-19.



Improved program planning and quality assurance including better data capture, analysis and near real time delivery of intelligence, for faster and smarter treatment deployment and reporting.



Improved field implementation by staff including understanding and application of the right of entry powers, treatment protocols and training (especially for contract staff).



Operational changes including increasing working shifts (for example weekend crews), within industrial limitations, to best utilise physical assets and access to 'at home' property owners.



Adopting a more assertive compliance posture and internal capacity (from voluntary compliance to publicised prosecution). This includes realignment of the fire ant biosecurity zones and pursuit of a harmonised approach to intra and inter-state to ensure consistent controls, messaging and enforcement.



Improved systems for verification of compliance with the General Biosecurity Obligation and more specific obligations (including interstate movement permits and protocols).



Engagement with organic certifiers to resolve concerns about fire ant treatment on certified organic properties.



Engagement with the infrastructure, property development and local government sectors to improve collaboration and compliance.



Improved public communication and engagement (including by publicising hot spots and increasing public awareness, reporting, treatment and compliance with legislated controls and general biosecurity obligation).



Developing reporting capabilities around improved qualitative and quantitative performance measures for key areas including customer service response rate, efficacy and verification rates and a shift beyond raw numbers of hectares or nests treated and the cost per unit of effort type measures.



Increasing the use of broad scale treatment methods for high density infestation sites located in the suppression areas.

Approved response

Our agreed actions

The Steering Committee at the workshop considered emerging implementation risks and issues, the performance of the Program across the 2017-18 period and the 10 areas identified for improvement.

In response the Steering Committee approved a number of agreed actions, outlined in the table below, to be commenced immediately and also addressed in the Work Plan 2018-19.

These actions are supplementary and complimentary to the ongoing, focussed activities undertaken by the Program in line with the Ten Year Plan.

#	Key Action Items	Commencing
1	Undertake boundary management to deal with the recent infestation to the west and north, as well as the Logan and Gold Coast corridors.	Quarter 2, 2018-19
2	Investigate incorporating fire ant risk management practices into development approvals; the public and private benefits of maintaining a development site fire ant free; and integrating development planning data into fire ant spread analysis and response planning.	Quarter 2, 2018-19
3	Publish current scientific insights and case studies for peer review; in particular those identified through genetic analysis of fire ant infestation.	Quarter 3, 2018-19
4	Explore opportunities to increase collaboration with universities and research institutions to distil greater insights from the comprehensive datasets currently available.	Ongoing
5	Adopt a more assertive regulatory posture which retains a preference for achieving voluntary compliance but utilises, where needed, more formalised compliance tools and responses.	Quarter 3, 2018-19
6	Review and update fire ant biosecurity zones.	Quarter 3, 2018-19
8	Develop a revised work plan and budget for 2018-19; addressing the 'as planned program' for the ten year plan and specific responses to emergent risks (key areas of improvement) presented across the workshop, and the biennial efficiency and financial audits and review milestones for the Program.	Quarter 2, 2018-19
9	Progress, as required, funding partner agreement of revised plan and milestones timing, and budget phasing.	Quarter 2, 2018-19



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