GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

BIOSECURITY COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Key Insights Summary

Improving local and coordinated management of Stable Fly in Western Australia

October 2026



Introduction

This Biosecurity Council of Western Australia (Council) Key Insights Summary outlines the scope of advice requested from the Minister for Agriculture and Food the Hon Jackie Jarvis MLC. The report presents the themes identified through stakeholder consultation, and Council's key observations and findings.

Background

Stable fly (*Stomoxys calcitrans*) is a nuisance fly that bites livestock, humans and pets, causing pain and stress. Heavy infestations can result in economic losses in commercial livestock production, animal welfare issues and amenity impacts.

Stable fly has become established on parts of Western Australia's Swan Coastal Plain and is not economically feasible to eradicate from the State. It is a declared pest under the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007* (BAM Act) in 15 local government areas, with its management regulated through the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management (Stable Fly) Management Plan 2019 (SFMP).[1]

The Minister for Agriculture and Food requested advice from the Council on ways to strengthen shared responsibility in Stable fly management in relation to:

- the shared understanding of roles and responsibilities across landholders, industry, and local and state governments in managing Stable fly and its breeding conditions.
- the uptake of Stable fly management actions by landholders and industry.
- local coordination of collective Stable fly management.
- support of local coordination of Stable fly management by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD).
- regulatory or other pathways available to local communities, industry and local government, outside of the BAM Act, to manage Stable fly and its breeding conditions.

To inform its advice, the Council consulted key stakeholders on their experiences of Stable fly impacts and management and sought views on their current management approaches, areas for improvement and support, and ongoing roles and responsibilities.

Stakeholders were invited to meet with Council members to share their experiences with Stable fly management, discuss its impacts and explore opportunities for improvement. Consultation was conducted between September and November 2025.

Discussions were held with 40 individuals including representatives from 24 industry, government, and community groups. These discussions targeted stakeholders involved in the regulation of Stable fly, those affected by its impact, and those whose land use or management practices could contribute to Stable fly outbreaks.

The Council led the consultations, with DPIRD supporting the process by documenting and analysing discussions to identify key findings.

[1] Stable fly is not assigned to a control category under the BAM regulations. This reflects that Stable fly is managed through the SFMP.

Engagement activities included:

- initial discussions between the Council and subject matter experts on 19 September 2025
- circulation of background materials and key questions to stakeholders
- field visit to several sites within the Shire of Gingin on 15 October 2025 to observe the issue firsthand and engage directly with stakeholders
- targeted discussions with local governments, industry groups, and community representatives
- DPIRD's investigation into regulatory and other pathways, including options outside the BAM Act to manage Stable fly and its breeding conditions.

The Biosecurity Council is grateful to the industry, community and government stakeholders who participated in the consultation process.

Key themes from stakeholder consultation

Stable fly impacts are highly localised. They are most severe and persistent in parts of the Shire of Gingin, with some presence in neighbouring areas. Stakeholders from some of the other local government areas included in the SFMP reported limited or declining impacts.

Cattle farmers in affected areas described animal welfare issues, including animal deaths, and a small number had changed enterprise models or considered selling properties. Equine owners in affected areas reported disruptions to training and events.

Farmers, local government officers, residents and visitors described distress and increased workloads, and Stable fly infestations were said to reduce outdoor recreation and deter visitors during peak tourism periods, raising concerns for the local tourism industry and regional economy.

In coastal towns such as Guilderton and Jurien Bay, Stable fly outbreaks were reported to deter outdoor recreation, with some residents and tourists avoiding beaches during peak fly seasons (which coincide with peak tourist periods). While these impacts are commonly attributed to Stable fly by affected communities, other biting fly species are also present in these environments.

Some stakeholders also raised concerns about Stable fly's potential role in spreading lumpy skin disease (LSD), which is a disease of cattle that is not present in Australia. Advice from DPIRD is that the likelihood of an incursion of LSD into Australia is low to very low, with WA's far northern regions at the greatest risk. In the event of a detection, surveillance and immediate movement controls would significantly reduce the likelihood of infected cattle being transported to Stable fly-prone areas, such as the Shire of Gingin. Vector control may be an adjunct measure.

Support for managing Stable fly varies. Local governments differ widely in the resources and attention they give the issue. The Shire of Gingin is the most active, with a dedicated Stable Fly Officer, while others focus on management information. Stakeholders also adopt a range of practical, on-ground measures.

Stakeholders perceived several barriers to more effective management. These included technical and practical difficulties applying prescribed controls in some

horticultural settings, uncertainty about the roles of State and local governments and industry groups, insufficient funding, capacity within local governments, and fragmented Stable fly awareness and technical knowledge.

Biosecurity Council observations

While implementation of the SFMP has contributed to reduced infestations in some locations, uptake of best practice measures has been inconsistent, and communications, compliance monitoring and enforcement vary. Favourable breeding conditions over the 2024-25 summer contributed to persistent high infestations in some areas, which were difficult to contain within existing management arrangements.

In practice, primary industry producers apply locally practical measures to limit Stable fly breeding that may not always be consistent with the SFMP, but reflect operational needs, resource constraints and site-specific conditions. While individual operations may generate limited organic waste, collectively they can contribute to breeding risk where manure or wet organic material are poorly managed.

Once Stable fly is present, management commonly focuses on reducing populations using integrated pest management strategies such as cultural control (crop hygiene, limited harvesting periods, cease irrigation after harvest), mechanical control (expose stumps to the surface and then mulch to desiccate on surface), and use of chemicals (such as sprays, baits or repellents) to reduce fly pressure and deter biting of animals. Sticky traps are used by some of the interviewed stakeholders to monitor activity and suppress local numbers, although their effectiveness is limited when Stable fly densities are high. It is noted that pesticides and insecticides are commonly used by vegetable growers as part of broader crop protection programs for a range of pests.

Across relevant local governments, the level of support varies according to the priority assigned to Stable fly, which reflects the degree of impact the pest is perceived to have on the local community. The Shire of Gingin is the most active, with targeted education and communication programs and a dedicated Stable Fly Officer providing direct support to landholders and helping develop innovative on-farm management practices. Other affected local governments primarily focus on providing information on Stable fly management on their websites, although the level of detail and frequency of updates varies.

The Stable Fly Action Group (SFAG), a voluntary community group, contributes to on-ground management through advocacy, public awareness, research, monitoring and advice and guidance. The SFAG remains an active and influential participant in Stable fly management. Industry bodies also recognise the importance of Stable fly management and play a key role in communicating relevant information to their members.

The WA Government, via DPIRD, provides the core technical, scientific and regulatory support for Stable fly management. Its work includes:

- long-standing entomological research to understand Stable fly biology, life cycle and effective management practices that underpin the SFMP
- collaboration with local governments and industry and community groups on education, training, and extension activities
- overseeing the regulatory settings for Stable fly, including the development, implementation and review of the SFMP
- awareness raising through public advice on Stable fly management through

its website and communication campaigns at strategic times of year
- training local government officers on Stable fly management, and to authorise selected officers as inspectors under the BAM Act to support monitoring and compliance with the SFMP
- enforcement activities, when warranted and requested by local governments.

Key themes from stakeholder consultation

Experiences and impacts

- **Stable fly presence and impact is highly localised.** The most severe and persistent impacts were concentrated in parts of the Shire of Gingin, with impacts also experienced in neighbouring areas. Stakeholders from some of the other local government areas included in the SFMP reported limited or declining impacts.
- **Cattle and horses are particularly affected.** Cattle farmers in affected areas reported animal welfare impacts, including animal deaths, and a small number had changed enterprise models or considered selling properties. Equine owners in affected areas described disruptions to training, agistment and events, with horses exhibiting distress behaviours.
- **There are human, community and economic impacts.** Farmers, local government officers, residents and visitors in affected areas reported distress and disruption, workplace impacts for farm worker exposed to bites, and increased workloads for local government officers. Stable fly infestations were said to reduce outdoor recreation and deter visitors during peak tourism periods in coastal towns such as Guilderton and Jurien Bay, raising concerns for the local tourism industry and regional economy.
- **Concern about the risks of Stable fly as a disease vector.** Stakeholders raised concerns about the potential for Stable fly to contribute to the spread of livestock diseases, such as LSD, particularly given Gingin's role in the livestock supply chain and proximity to the Muchea Livestock Centre.[2]

Current management and support approaches

- **Fragmented adoption of management requirements.** Adoption of specific management requirements under the SFMP, across operators of all sizes and sectors, appeared to be fragmented.
- **Locally practical measures are important.** Stakeholders reported adoption of a range of practical and innovative practices to limit Stable fly breeding and impacts. These may not always be consistent with the SFMP, but reflect operational needs, resource constraints and site-specific conditions.
- **Variable support from local governments.** Local governments reported varied levels of support, reflecting the degree of impact Stable fly was perceived to have on the local community. The Shire of Gingin appeared the most active, with targeted education and communication and a dedicated Stable Fly Officer providing direct support and advice to landholders. Other affected local governments focused primarily on providing Stable fly management information, although the level of detail and frequency of updates varied.
- **Industry, community and government support.** Industry bodies appeared to recognise the importance of Stable fly management and to actively communicate information to their members. The SFAG,

[2] Note – Advice from DPIRD indicates that the likelihood of an incursion of LSD into Australia is low to very low. In the event of an LSD detection, surveillance, immediate movement controls and possibly vaccination would significantly reduce the likelihood of infected cattle being transported to Stable fly-prone areas, such as the Shire of Gingin. Vector control may be an adjunct measure.

representing those affected by Stable fly, was seen to contribute to on-ground management through advocacy, public awareness, research, monitoring and guidance. DPIRD was observed to provide technical, scientific and regulatory support for Stable fly management, including entomological research and engagement with local government and industry and community groups on education, training and extension.

Constraints, gaps and challenges

- **Technical and practical barriers.** Core horticulture practices were perceived by some stakeholders to create favourable Stable fly breeding conditions, while also limiting the effectiveness of chemical control options. Access to recommended chemicals under the SFMP was also reported as a constraint, and some prescribed management measures were viewed as costly, difficult to implement or associated with unintended impacts (e.g. soil erosion). While some alternative on-farm practices were considered promising by some stakeholders, they had not been scientifically validated or formally recognised, which was seen as limiting their adoption.
- **Regulatory gaps and limitations.** Some stakeholders suggested the SFMP was unclear and lacked flexibility to accommodate site-specific conditions or emerging management approaches. Some stakeholders also noted that local governments are not authorised to take enforcement action for Stable fly under the BAM Act and expressed concern about whether current arrangements are sufficient to support timely and effective response.
- **Coordination and communication challenges.** Stakeholders described uncertainty about the respective roles of State and local governments and industry groups. Communication and education targeting smaller, non-commercial producers and landholders was described as challenging.
- **Resource constraints.** Some stakeholders felt that insufficient funding, staffing and capability within local governments constrained their ability to undertake proactive inspections, respond quickly to complaints or enforce compliance. Funding constraints were also seen to limit investment in research and the development of more practical management options, as well as the delivery of extension and communication activities.
- **Knowledge gaps.** Smaller growers and peri-urban landholders were perceived by some stakeholders as lacking awareness and technical knowledge to manage Stable fly, including awareness of the SFMP. There also appeared to be gaps in understanding between some stakeholders, particularly regarding the perspectives and operational constraints of horticultural producers.

Improvements

- **Developing evidence-based best practice.** The need to develop financially viable, science-based management solutions for pivot irrigation systems was identified by some stakeholders. There was also interest in validating locally developed solutions and strengthening the evidence base to support their broader adoption.
- **Strengthening regulatory and compliance arrangements.** Stakeholders suggested updating the SFMP to make it more practical and aligned with current farming systems and best practices and exploring options to strengthen regulatory arrangements to better support local responses.

- **Enhancing coordination and communication.** Stakeholders identified opportunities to improve coordination, information sharing and engagement across government, industry and community groups. Strengthening mutual understanding and using trusted intermediaries to deliver consistent messaging were also highlighted.
- **Building local capacity and resources.** Stakeholders suggested a need for increased resourcing to support local government, along with targeted training to build local capability.
- **Increasing knowledge and awareness.** Developing practical education and extension was highlighted by some stakeholders, along with delivering consistent seasonal messaging and activities to improve awareness among growers, peri-urban landholders and horse owners to support compliance and reduce risks.

Key findings

Council's consultation identified that Stable fly impacts in WA are highly localised but can be severe where they occur, particularly where horticultural, livestock and residential land uses intersect. The findings highlight the importance of locally led management, targeted State support of local activities, capability-building and communication. Stakeholders expressed support for an improved, evidence-based and shared approach that clarifies roles, strengthens capability, supports local innovation, and improves education and communication.

Stakeholders pointed to opportunities to improve Stable fly management by:

- developing and validating more practical, evidence-based management options;
- strengthening coordination and information-sharing between government, industry and community groups;
- building the capability and resourcing of local governments; and
- improving education and communication, particularly consistent seasonal messaging for growers, peri-urban landholders and horse owners.

Combined, these findings point to the value of a more coordinated, locally led and better-supported approach to managing Stable fly in the areas most affected.

Based on consultation findings and assessment of feasibility, proportionality and value for money, the Council's advice focuses on strengthening coordination, capability and communication to support locally led management in areas where Stable fly impacts are most significant.

Council identified that there could be benefit in enhancing cross-sector coordination to improve role clarity, information sharing, the quality of support materials and guidance, local problem-solving, and coordinated action.

Council also noted the value of maintaining DPIRD's provision of support to develop local government capacity for Stable fly management, and its ongoing provision of communication and extension materials. This includes training for Environmental Health Officers and Rangers to undertake community education and provide support to landholders.

A further finding was that support for Stable fly education, extension and local demonstration activities should be continued, particularly during peak Stable fly periods. This is recognised as supporting awareness of obligations and the uptake of effective management practices.

It was also identified that there may be benefit in exploring whether alternative regulatory and non-regulatory pathways, outside of the BAM Act, could support Stable fly management.

About the Biosecurity Council

The Biosecurity Council of Western Australia (WA) (Council) is an advisor to the Minister for Agriculture and Food and the Director General of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. Current Council members include:

- Professor Warren Harding AM, Chair
- Professor Owen Nevin
- Ms Renata Paliskis
- Professor Shashi Sharma
- Cr Ellen Smith
- Dr Tracy Sullivan
- Dr Melissa Thomas

The Council also acknowledge the significant contributions of former Council Chair Justin Bellanger and member Dr Kelly Pearce to the project and for helping to guide its development.

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