

MEEKATHARRA RANGELANDS BIOSECURITY ASSOCIATION INC
CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2019/2020

INTRODUCTION

The Meekatharra Rangelands Biosecurity Association Inc (MRBA) is an industry body with a membership of all pastoralists in the Shires of Yalgoo, Mount Magnet, Cue and Meekatharra. The Association is established under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007 with a charter to manage and control declared pests, both animal and plant.

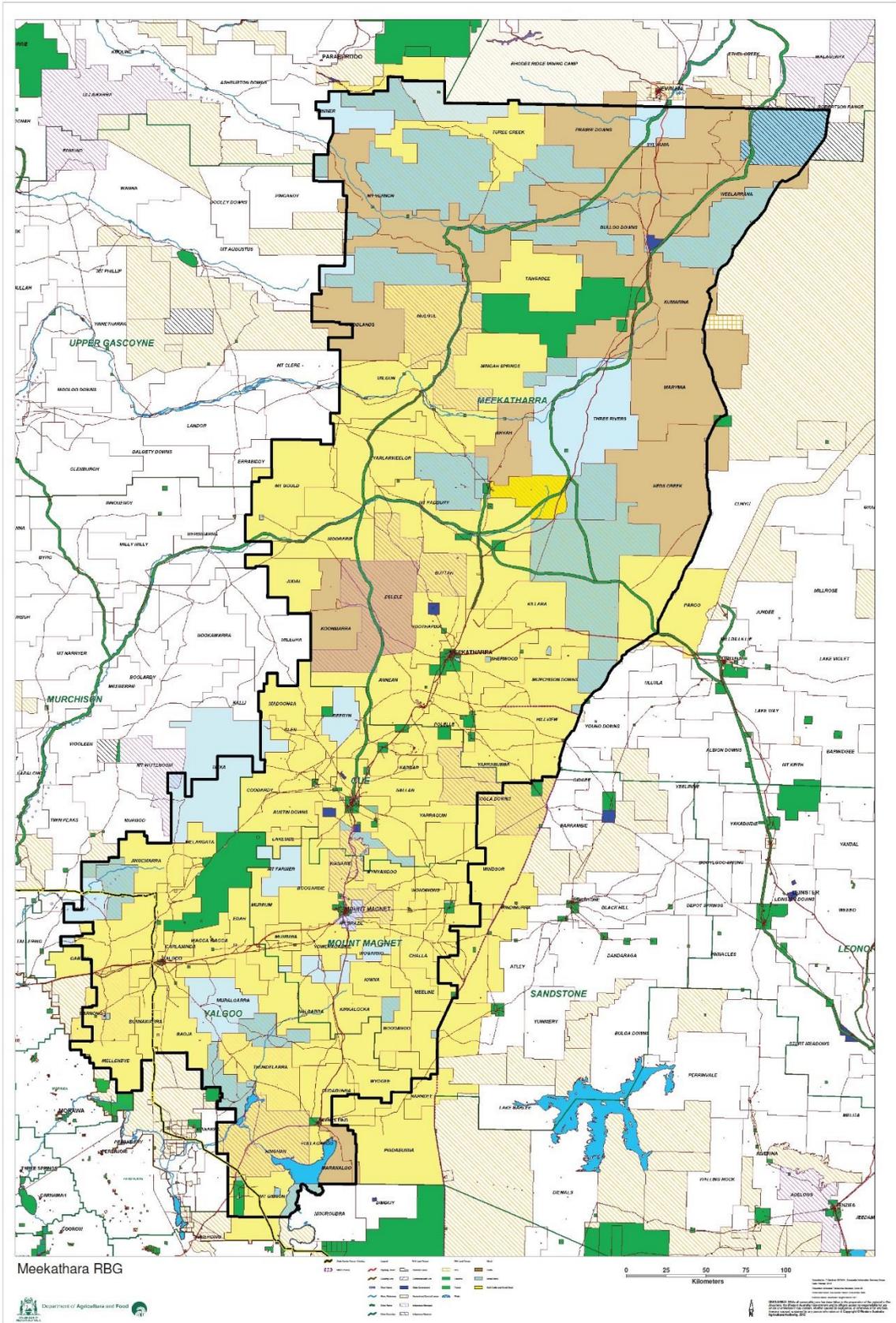
The MRBA Constitution provides for a Management Committee, of up to eleven members, with the responsibility of overseeing the operation of the Association. The Management Committee (with dates elected) as of 30 June 2020 was:

- Chairman – Ashley Dowden (2018)
- Vice Chairman – Greg Watters (2018)
- Secretary/Treasurer – Eric Moses (2017)
- Jarrad Blair (2019)
- Darren Cousens (2017)
- Jorgen Jensen (2019)
- Liam Johns (2018)
- Rob Lefroy (2019)
- Angus Nichols (2017)
- Greg Payne (2019)
- Murray Pens (2018)

MRBA operations are funded from annual declared pest rates paid by pastoralists, which are matched by the State Government and also one-off grants from State and Federal NRM programs, Royalties for Regions and other sources.

The MRBA area covers approximately 184,000 square kilometres and incorporates 72 pastoral properties. There are also other landholdings with a mix of tenure including mining leases, UCL, national reserves and indigenous managed pastoral leases.

The following map shows the extent of the MRBA area.



MEEKATHARRA RBG

MRBA OPERATIONS 2019/2020

DECLARED PEST ACCOUNT FUNDING

The MRBA has established a Declared Pest Account (DPA) into which the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) deposits the declared pest rates paid by pastoralists and the government's matching contribution. In 2019/2020 DPA receipts were \$460,200 with an expenditure, excluding GST, of \$432,732. The principal activities and costs funded from the Declared Pest Account were:

2019/2020 Community Wild Dog Baiting Program

In 2019/2020 the MRBA planned for a community bait rack program involving an autumn and spring baiting. Due to the Covid19 shutdowns the Autumn (April 2020) bait rack program had to be cancelled hence in 2019/2020 there was only community bait rack event which occurred in September 2019. The MRBA operates seven bait racks with the program for 2019/2020 detailed below:

Location	Spring Baiting Dates 2019	Spring Quantity/Type of Bait Kg
Pullagaroo	3 October Thursday	800 bulk 300 bulk DBCA
Challa	7 October Monday	2,200 bulk
Melangata	9 October Wednesday	2,200 bulk 300 bulk DBCA
Killara	16 October Wednesday	700 bulk 300 bulk DBCA
Yarraquin	17 October Thursday	750 bulk
Yarlarweelor	12/13 October Sat/Sun	2,950 bulk 300 pre-cut
Ilgarrarie	19/20 Sept Thursday/Friday	1,600 bulk
		11,200 kg bulk 300 pre-cut DBCA 900 bulk Total 12,400 kg

Meat quantities are determined in consultation with Rack Co-ordinators and in 2019/2020 expenditure was \$42,419. In September 2019, a specially fitted out aircraft was hired from Exmouth to enable baits prepared at the Ilgarrarie bait rack to be laid in inaccessible country in the north of the MRBA area. The cost of this aerial baiting was \$11,270.

As can be seen from the table above the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) are involved and they have staff in attendance at the Pullagaroo, Melangata and Killara bait racks. In 2019/2020 DBCA purchased baits prepared on their behalf from the MRBA at a cost of \$5,940.

During the year the compressor in the 20' refrigerated container located at Sherwood Station failed. After exploring the option of purchasing a second-hand replacement unit it was decided that the best course of action was the keep the existing container and replace the compressor. The cost of the replacement compressor was \$12,243 which included improvements to power supply arrangements.

The MRBA community baiting program operates on the basis that a co-ordinated approach, where all pastoralists lay baits within the same time frame, is a fundamental component of a successful wild dog reduction program. Further details of the community baiting program are contained in the MRBA Wild Dog Management Plan which is available on request.



Illrararies Bait Racks

Employment of Doggers

In 2019/2020 the MRBA employed five Licenced Pest Management Technicians (LPMTs) or doggers utilising declared pest account funding. The role of the doggers is to support pastoralists in their efforts to control wild dogs by trapping and also laying baits.

The areas of operation of the doggers was Yagahong, Meekatharra West, Cue, Mount Magnet and Mount Magnet East. The five doggers worked for a combined total of 503 days, on a part time and full-time basis, at a total cost of \$281,599. In all 345 dogs were trapped.

In addition to trapping and baiting doggers maintain close contact with pastoralists and provide technical advice on wild dog management when required.

During the year the MRBA replaced 54 serrated jaw traps with laminated jaw traps in preparation for possible future changes in legislation prohibiting the use of serrated jaws. This was a cost neutral exercise as an antique collector was found who was willing to purchase the serrated jaw traps at a cost equivalent to the price of their laminated replacements.

Large Feral Herbivore (LFH) Aerial Cull – November 2019

A grant of \$50,000 was obtained from the DPIRD for the culling of LFHs (feral camels, horses and donkeys) in the north east of the MRBA area. This funding was provided by the Minister to supplement MRBA Declared Pest Account pastoralist funding. In November 2019, a five-day aerial cull was conducted by DPIRD Biosecurity staff at a cost of \$80,887 with a total of 1,360 feral animals destroyed. Detailed results are as follows:

	Donkeys	Horses	Camels
Collier Range National Park R35104	35	1	0
Neds Creek Station	4	7	0
Three Rivers Station	0	122	30
Marymia Station	140	91	61
Kumarina Station	85	24	25
Weelarrana Station	45	23	0
Bulloo Downs Station	182	19	10
Sylvania Station	17	4	0
Mingah Springs Station	0	36	9
Turee Creek Station	64	47	0
UCI - Various	104	149	33
	676	523	168

MRBA culls are carried out in accordance with the Invasive Animals CRC Model Code of Practice for the Humane Control of LFHs.



LFH Aerial Control

ROYALTIES FOR REGIONS DOGGER FUNDING

Employment of Doggers – Wild Dog Control on Crown Lands and Adjoining Pastoral Leases

In April 2014, the MRBA was successful in gaining funding under the Royalties for Regions Program for the employment of four doggers for the three-year period to 30 June 2017. This arrangement was extended for a further three years as part of the WA Wild Dog Action Plan 2016-2020 to 30 June 2020 with funding of \$703,000.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) is currently updating the Wild Dog Action Plan which will include future R4R funding allocations. With the Murchison Regional Vermin Cell now fully funded and due for completion in November 2021 it is essential that wild dog control on crown lands within the area of the cell is accelerated. Representations to this effect were made to the Minister and Department and very pleasingly a continuation of Royalties for Regions funding has been approved by the Minister up until 30 June 2021. This gives time for the Government to consider ongoing funding requirements for the control of wild dogs on government managed pastoral lands which has been delayed by the COVID19 crisis.

In 2019/2020 the Royalties for Regions funded doggers worked a combined total of 465 days. The doggers operate on lands under the control of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and adjoining pastoral lease buffer zones.

Areas of operation are Doolgunna north east of Meekatharra, Paynes Find and Yalgoo.

Expenditure in 2019/2020 totalled \$261,889 with 303 wild dogs being destroyed.

STATE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND RESEARCH GRANT FUNDING

The MRBA is in 2019/2020 managed grants as follows:

1. A State NRM grant for \$12,000 for the mapping and spraying of an infestation of cactus on Paroo Station.



Cactus Infestation – Yandil - Paroo Station

2. A Research and Development grant of \$140,000 obtained from DPIRD for the development of drone technology capable of locating wild dogs and potentially identify individual animals using facial recognition. A drone bait delivery system has been successfully field tested with the focus now on the facial recognition part of the project. This grant was obtained as a result of a joint application by the MRBA, Mayne Jenour, Jingemarra Station and Nigel Brown, Autonomous Technology.



Autonomous Technology Drone Fitted with Bait Delivery System

It is a pleasure to submit this annual report and in so doing I acknowledge with thanks the contribution over the last twelve months of all Committee Members, the Secretary Treasurer Eric Moses and Executive Officer Geoff Brooks.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.W. Williams", written over a horizontal line.

Chairman
Meekatharra Rangelands Biosecurity Association
13 October 2020

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