



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

DECLARED PEST RATE

What is a Declared Pest Rate?

- Declared Pest Rates (DPR) are collected to support Recognised Biosecurity Groups (RBG), which have been formed by landholders who are concerned about the management of widespread and established declared pests in their communities.
- The *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007* (BAM Act) allows RBGs to request the Minister for Agriculture and Food to determine a Declared Pest Rate (DPR) to be raised in their prescribed area.
- Rates are spent on the activities detailed in each RBG's operational plan, which is based on priority pests within their communities, which vary for each RBG.
- The WA State Government matches all Declared Pest Rates raised dollar-for-dollar - doubling the funds available for declared pest management.
- RBGs are working on a strategic approach to achieve long-lasting impacts on declared pests, and therefore Declared Pest Rates provide the certainty of funding needed for this to occur.

What is a declared pest?

- Widespread and established pests can be declared under the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007*, and are considered by government to be beyond prevention and eradication and are widespread in their distribution, across the state or within regions.
- Examples include narrow leaf cotton bush, Paterson's curse, blackberry, cape tulip, bridal creeper, some cactus species, wild rabbits, feral pigs, foxes and wild dogs.

How long has the DPR existed?

- Five RBGs in WA's pastoral regions have been collecting a DPR since 2014. Prior to that, it was collected as the Agriculture Pest Rate under the *Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act 1976*.
- The RBG and DPR model has since been extended to the agricultural region.

Does everyone in Western Australia have to pay a Declared Pest Rate?

- A DPR is chargeable only for local governments within the prescribed area of an RBG. Not all local governments have a RBG operating in their area, or have a Declared Pest Rate being raised in their area.

This is government trying to get hold of my money

- This is not a State or local government rate. It goes direct to the RBGs operating in the areas it is collected from, to spend on activities that their communities want to see happen.
- DPIRD is involved by matching dollar-for-dollar any rates raised, which are also made available to the RBGs. This means your community will have double the amount of funding available for pest management.
- RBGs are controlled by local representatives, many of who pay the rate themselves, and who want to make sure their rates are well spent.
- RBGs and DPIRD are not involved in the issuing of rates notices or collection of rates – this is done by the Office of State Revenue.

Are the owners of government land being charged a rate?

- No. However, under the BAM Act, it is the responsibility of landholders to control pests on their own land and this includes all levels of government.
- RBGs can develop partnerships with government agencies to ensure pest management occurs on both private and public land, with a coordinated approach.

Can RBGs access other funds?

- Yes. In addition to the funds from Declared Pest Rates, RBGs can seek and obtain funds from others sources e.g. State Natural Resources Management Office, Royalties for Regions programs and private organisations.
- However, DPR funding is likely to be the most sustainable way for RBGs to fund activities to control declared pests over the long-term.

RECOGNISED BIOSECURITY GROUPS

What is a Recognised Biosecurity Group?

- Landholders who are concerned about management of widespread and established declared pests in their community can form biosecurity groups that may become a Recognised Biosecurity Group (RBG), through formal recognition under the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007* (BAM Act).
- Each RBG has been based on the specific pest management needs of their local communities, which vary.
- RBGs exist to help landholders manage declared pests on their own land, which is a requirement under the BAM Act.
- RBGs are also about normalising declared pest management across the community.
- They facilitate a community led, coordinated and cooperative approach.
- They are community led because the activities of each RBG are specific to their priority pests, which are decided on by their communities.
- They facilitate cooperation by organising coordinated control activities at both a landscape-scale and regional-scale.
- Pest management can be challenging for individuals when the species is widespread and crosses boundaries, and is best addressed when communities, industries and government are working together.

How are RBG boundaries determined?

- When a biosecurity group is seeking to be recognised, the group recommends to the Minister for Agriculture and Food the area to be specified for their operations.
- DPIRD encourages biosecurity groups to form along shire boundaries. Forming along shire boundaries is the easiest and most efficient way to administer the raising and collection of the Declared Pest Rate.

How can I get involved with a RBG?

- Find out if you have an RBG operating in your area, and contact them to learn about planned activities and opportunities to be involved.
- Contact details are available from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development website.

RBG ACTIVITIES

What exactly does an RBG do?

- The purpose of an RBG is specific to each. They vary according to each RBG's declared pest priorities, focus and strategy.
- It may be to create awareness, develop individual or community pest management knowledge and skills, provide the equipment and materials need for declared pest control, provide support through Licenced Pest Management Technicians, determine compliance programs or sometimes help fund on-ground control activities.
- They can organise landscape-scale coordinated activities, or collaborate and build partnerships with other RBGs, not for profit entities, industry and government to control declared pests that require large-scale regional efforts to manage.
- In summary:
 - **Educate** - RBGs help landholders understand their legal obligations under the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007* to manage declared pests on their own land, and how an RBG can help.
 - **Support** – RBGs provide landholders with knowledge, skills and the confidence to carry out control activities successfully on their land.
 - **Coordinate** - Declared pests don't recognise fence lines, so RBGs can help landholders to coordinate their activities on a large scale to make long-lasting impacts.
 - **Plan** - RBGs develop annual operational plans that detail management strategies and the budget needed for the year. These are based on local declared pest priorities, which are developed with input from landholders and their communities, as they are best placed to know about their local pest problems.

What are examples of what my rate will be spent on?

- Displays at local and regional field days and shows.
- Websites, social media, newsletters, brochures, annual reports.
- Meetings, presentations and information sessions.
- Training in:
 - various methods of control
 - pest identification
 - chemical use and certification.
- Individual pest workshops and control demonstrations.
- Subsidies for bait, restricted chemical product permits and chemicals.
- Provision of materials and equipment needed for pest management, through lending or hiring of equipment for landholder use.
- Annual awareness reminders.
- Seasonal control programs, such as community fox shoots, rabbit virus release and community baiting days.
- On-ground activities to complement landholder efforts, such as organising or engaging contractors to provide control of pests such as wild dogs or feral pigs.
- Opportunities for input into RBG activities:
 - face to face
 - surveys
 - app reporting such as Feralscan
 - requests for input

- mail outs
- feedback at local events and workshops
- Facebook posts
- Annual General Meetings

How do I find out what my money has been spent on?

- Expenditure is detailed in RBG annual reports, which are submitted to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), placed on the DPIRD website and tabled at the RBG's own Annual General Meetings (open to the public).

I am already carrying out pest control. Why should I pay for managing pests on someone else's property?

- RBG activities are aimed at getting your neighbours on the same page when it comes to pest management, so that management activities are coordinated. This is the only way to make a lasting impact, because pests don't recognise boundaries or fence lines.
- To get everyone involved, landholders need awareness, information, skills and the means to carry out control. This is what a Declared Pest Rate pays for.
- Your rate is also paying for overall community and environmental benefits, such as preventing weeds from invading your town's landscapes, and reducing the impact of feral animals on our unique native plants and animals.

I don't have any pests on my property. What do I get out of paying a rate?

- The benefit you receive is stronger local economic development, and the environmental benefits of reducing the numbers of feral animals and invasive weeds.
- Research carried out through the Threatened Species Recovery Hub highlighted that invasive species are impacting 1,257 threatened species in Australia. The rabbit topped the top 10 list - impacting more than 321 native threatened species, including both plants and animals. Feral pigs also made the list impacting 149 threatened species.
- RBGs carry out a number of activities to reduce feral rabbit and pig numbers. This includes community-wide fox shoots, area-wide release of the feral rabbit virus, trapping/baiting workshops, and contracting Licensed Pest Management Technicians to carry out wild dog and feral pig control.

The RBG should use my rate to carry out pest control on my behalf

- Some RBGs might allocate funds to on-ground control when they determine there is a need to support landholders, such as managing large volumes of pests that cross tenures across large areas.
- Although RBG activities are always intended to complement landholder efforts – never to replace them.
- Where landholders don't have the skills or motivation to carry out pest management, RBGs may instead allocate funds to activities other than on-ground control, such as training and education.
- The circumstances for each RBG vary, and therefore their activities will not be the same.

How much of my rate will be spent on RBG staff?

- Good planning and management is needed to make best use of the Declared Pest Rate, which requires administrative staff.
- Staffing and contractors are also required to carry out activities such as training, surveillance, baiting, pest control and reporting.
- All RBGs want to minimise staff costs so they can maximise on-ground activities and pest control.
- RBGs are controlled by local representatives, many of who pay the rate themselves, and who want to make sure their rates are well spent.

CALCULATION AND PAYMENT

How is the DPR calculated?

The process starts with RBGs developing an annual operational plan, which forms the basis on which to calculate the rate.

DPIRD then reviews the plan and advises the Minister for Agriculture and Food what rate is required to deliver on these plans.

The rate may be recommended as either the same amount for each property (a flat rate), or rates based on the unimproved value of land as provided by the Valuer General (ad valorem rate).

Before the rates are finalised the Minister for Agriculture and Food carries out consultation on the proposed rates, to be considered prior to the rates being finalised and gazetted (published in the WA Government Gazette).

Consultation is a requirement under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management (Declared Pest Account) Regulations 2014.

The consultation period is promoted widely through public notices, social media and direct letters.

How are the rates collected?

- The Office of State Revenue is responsible for issuing of notices and collections of Declared Pest Rates.
- The DPR collected is matched dollar-for-dollar with State Government funds and transferred to the Declared Pest Account, which is administered by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.
- Funds are then made available to each RBG.

Why have my rates increased?

- The calculation of Declared Pest Rates are based on each RBG's annual operational plan and budget, which changes according to need.
- This means that groups may undertake different activities each year, which may result in an increase in the budget required.

My rate is different from my neighbours/from other RBGs?

- The DPR for each RBG may differ, as they are based on each RBG's priority pests and annual operational plan and budget, which are specific to each group.
- Additionally, RBGs decide on the DPR differently, with some charging the same amount for each property (a flat rate), or based on the unimproved value of land as provided by the Valuer General (ad valorem rate).
- Landholders within the same RBG area may pay different rates due to factors decided on by your RBG, such as property size, or if an ad valorem rate is applied.
- These factors also influence whether or not a landholder must pay a DPR.

When do I have to pay the rate?

- DPR notices are issued by the Office of State Revenue in September/October each year. Rates are due 49 days from date of issue.

I refuse to pay/will be sending the invoice to DPIRD

- The Office of State Revenue is responsible for managing the recovery of unpaid rates.
- Rates are due 49 days from date of issue. Within a month of expiry of the due date, OSR issues a payment demand notice via a letter or e-mail, giving a further 3-4 weeks for payment.
- Outstanding debts of two or more years are secured with a Memorial on the Title of the relevant property preventing sale and the registration of a mortgage such as re-financing.

I can't afford to pay

- You have the option of contacting the Office of State Revenue to make alternative payment arrangements, such as instalments.

I'm being told my rate is based on how many VENs I own. What is a VEN?

- A VEN is a Valuation Entity Number given to a parcel or parcels of land by the Valuer General (through Landgate).
- VENs are not generated by RBGs or DPIRD.
- Each VEN is charged a rate.
- If you have more than one VEN then you will be charged more than once.
- The same VEN is also used by the Shires for their own rate assessments.

I don't live in a RBG area/addressed to wrong person

- Please call the Office of State Revenue.

I called OSR and they have no idea what my money will be spent on

- The Office of State Revenue only deals with the issuing of rate notices and collection.
- They are not informed on each RBG's operational activities or what landholders will gain from paying the DPR.
- If you require information on your RBG and its expenditure, please contact the group direct.

Do pensioners have to pay?

- Eligible pensioners can apply to the Office of State Revenue to have their rate payments postponed, provided they meet the requirements under section 136 of the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007*.
- Contact the Office of State Revenue for more information.