

# Kimberley Rangelands Biosecurity Association Invasive Species Activity Report

2019/20

## Large Feral Herbivores

The Kimberley Rangelands Biosecurity Association (KRBA) has an annual Large Feral Herbivore culling program that includes feral donkeys, horses and camels with other animals such as water buffalo and pigs targeted when located. The program focusses primarily on donkeys, using the radio telemetry technique with horses and camels culled opportunistically during tracking. Currently there are approximately 50 active collars throughout the region including three satellite collars utilised for research purposes.

Occasionally and as required dedicated management culls are enacted for feral horses and camels. An example of this is an annual cull of feral horses in the East Kimberley focusing on the Great Northern Highway and adjacent pastoral leases. The cull's primary role is to reduce the risk of traffic accidents and the subsequent potential injury to road users.

There were four runs done in the year, two focussing primarily of donkeys in the North and West Kimberley and there was a further two East-Kimberley runs that focussed on horses and camels south of Halls Creek. Results of animals culled on those runs are as follows –

Donkeys	Horses	Camels	Pigs
249	465	1189	8

In addition to the culls three collars were deployed on new donkeys over the year.

It is recognised by the KRBA that land managers also contribute to controlling feral herbivores with both opportunistic and planned culling programs of their own however no figures of those programs are available with the exception of one report of approximately 400 camels culled in advance of the KRBA cull carried out in November 2019.

No aerial shooting operations were carried out over Department of Parks and Wildlife managed land by the KRBA. However Department of Parks and Wildlife did undertake its own management shoot over the Drysdale National Park, the Ord River Regeneration area and other reserves.

## Wild Dogs

The KRBA runs two aerial baiting programs a year to support the individual ground baiting programs run by pastoral stations. They are usually programed for April and September to avoid rains that will render the baits useless. The programs are coordinated by Animal Pest Management Services (APMS).

The September 2019 program covered 29 leases resulting in the following bait quantities dropped or supplied to pastoralists –

- 46,850 field prepared baits and injected by APMS
- 5,800 dried meat baits supplied by APMS

- 5 litres of 1080 CLC supplied to pastoralists to inject their own baits

The May 2020 program was delayed until June due to COVID-19 restrictions. The program covered 34 leases resulting in the following bait quantities dropped or supplied to pastoralists

–

- 61,800 baits were injected by APMS
- 4,000 pre-made field prepared dried meat baits were supplied to stations by APMS
- 13 L 1080 CLC supplied to pastoralists to inject their own baits

## **Pigs**

No work was undertaken on pigs this year however it was agreed that the KRBA would support the North Kimberley LCDC'S funding application to roll out the AWC mobile feeder/poison bait concept into the North Kimberley.

## **Prickly Acacia**

**Nulla Nulla:** Three control programs were carried out on the 10,578 hectare Nulla Nulla site over the 2019/20 wet season. In total 117 plants were controlled, a slight increase of plants found on the previous year's control program. It's expected that total eradication could be achieved within a decade.

**Gordon Downs:** No survey work was carried out at this location this year.

## **Mesquite**

**Nicholson Station:** Only one control program was carried out in November 2019 on the 5,748 hectare site over the 2019/20 wet season as it was too dry for a follow up run in January 2020. In total of 141 plants were controlled, up slightly on the plants found in the previous year.

**Thangoo/Yeeda:** No control was carried out on Thangoo Station or Yeeda Station.

## **Rubber vine (*Cryptostegia grandiflora*)**

Rubber vine control in the Kimberley is split between two regional locations, one in the East Kimberley and the other in the west. Both programs run independently of the other with separate steering groups overseeing the planning and work carried out.

The KRBA provides both funding and in-kind support to both programs. This year the KRBA agreed to take on the role of sponsor organisation for the group's SNRM funding applications and to provide financial management of the programs due to Rangelands NRM no longer wishing to maintain that role as it had done in the past. Other partner organisations also provide funding and in-kind contributions such as personnel to carry out the control and survey work.

**East Kimberley:** Rubber vine has been located at three locations in the East Kimberley – Oombulgurri, the Ord and Bow Rivers upstream of Lake Argyle and Limestone Creek adjacent to the Ord/Bow locations. A number of field trips were carried out over the 2020 dry season covering 685 hectares on those locations, there was a slight decrease of coverage on the previous year's program due to some of the older areas being declared weed free.

A total of 13,684 plants were treated, a significantly higher number than the year before due to a relatively small in area but high in density infestation found approximately 20 kilometres outside the core infestation area. An aerial survey program was undertaken in March 2019 covering approximately 31,000 hectares and locating 70 seeders.

**West Kimberley:** The Aquila annual helicopter survey was abandoned for this year due to

climatic conditions inhibiting the flower production required to allow the plants to be located from the air. However all active Return Sites were searched and all detected plants controlled. These areas encompassed approximately 300 ha. 39 Return Sites were finally extinguished and 32 Return Sites will continue to require monitoring with 3 new Return Sites added.

A further 208 hectares of the Intense Infestation Area were grid searched at 10-metre spacing, finding 4 adult vines at a density of one plant per half a square kilometre.

Plants Controlled included -

- 452 Seedlings - 300 attributed to one Return Site with the remainder attributed to five sites
- 280 Juveniles - 202 attributed to six Return Sites
- 221 Adults - 130 attributed to six Return Sites
- 6 Breeders - 2 breeders with offspring, one released some seed but no plants in situ.
- 2 Uncontrolled Adults – These were left in situ as future Test Vines for Aquila

### **Gamba grass**

Funding was provided to the gamba grass steering group to carry out an ongoing eradication program on El Questro Station. Control was undertaken between March -June 2020 utilising contractors with EL Questro staff, DPIRP and DBCA assistance. 23 plants were removed this year (down from 277 in 2020).

This year the KRBA agreed to take on the role of sponsor organisation for the group's SNRM funding applications and to provide financial management of the programs due to Rangelands NRM no longer wishing to maintain that role as it had done in the past. Other partner organisations also provide funding and in-kind contributions such as personnel to carry out the control and survey work.

### **Weed subsidies**

Weed subsidies were paid out to a number of pastoral stations for the control of declared weeds on those properties.

### **Risk Management**

A number of initiatives were undertaken in the 2019/20 financial year to reduce risks associated with the organisation's programs and membership activities, they were –

- Both the EO and FO reviewed and revised the organisation's OH&S policies and procedures and alterations made as required
- Insurances maintained for 2020-21
- Insurance and licensing details for 2020-21 obtained from contractors (total 8).
- Heli-Muster and APMS COVID-19 Management Plan and SOPs enacted.

### **Member engagement**

The following engagement strategies were implemented in the 2018/19 financial year –

- Quarterly newsletters were sent to members.
- Only one stakeholder meeting was attended due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Website was brought online
- Biannual member survey to guide the operational plan was carried out however restrictions around COVID-19 meant that a lesser number of members could be surveyed this time.