
FLOODING AND KANGAROO HARVESTING PROGRAM

Core message

Internal Memo

This brief provides information about flood impacts on kangaroos and seeks your approval to not to make changes to the Kangaroo Harvest Program or the remaining quota in 2022.

Timing

Recommendations

1. That you approve no changes to the Kangaroo Harvest Program or the remaining quota in 2022.

Approved Not approved Noted Returned for review

2. That you approve the provided response to Wildlife Victoria.

Approved Not approved Noted Returned for review

Comments

From Biodiversity Regulatory Reform

Prepared by: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Reviewed by: Warrick McGrath Director Biodiversity Regulatory Reform [REDACTED]

From BIODIVERSITY REGULATORY REFORM BRANCH
Title FLOODING AND KANGAROO HARVESTING PROGRAM

Key Information

1. The recent high rainfall in Victoria has led to flooding in some areas of the state, particularly in central and northern parts of the state resulting in localised impacts on kangaroos and their habitat.
2. There have been media enquiries and calls from Wildlife Victoria, including most recent email to the Ministers for Agriculture and Environment (**Attachment 1**), to halt the Kangaroo Harvesting Program (KHP). Specifically, Wildlife Victoria requested that:
 - a. The KHP be halted immediately.
 - b. The Office of the Conservation Regulator (CR) immediately cease issuing Authority to Control Wildlife permits (ATCWs).
 - c. An independent report be undertaken and published to establish a baseline for wildlife populations after the floods.
3. The emergency response to address wildlife welfare created by recent flooding started in early December 2022. Approximately 2,000 kangaroos perished or were euthanised on Beveridge Island on the Murray River.
4. Beveridge Island falls within the Upper Wimmera KHP harvest zone. The total recommended level of control of kangaroos in this zone in 2022 is 13,350, which is 10 per cent of the population of this zone (based on 2020 population estimates).
5. Monitoring of kangaroo control shows that between 1 January 2022 and November 30 2022, no more than 5.4 per cent of the grey kangaroo population in the Upper Wimmera zone has been controlled in 2022. This consists of:
 - i. 5,578 through the KHP; and
 - ii. 1,589 through ATCWs
6. The kangaroos euthanised on Beveridge Island in early December represent approximately 1.4 per cent of the population of the Upper Wimmera zone. This puts total control at 7 per cent of the population of this zone to date in 2022.
7. Across the seven Victorian kangaroo harvest zones, just over 6 per cent of the Victorian grey kangaroo population has been controlled, below the maximum of 10 per cent.
8. Flooding had localised impacts on kangaroos and their habitat, but there has been no significant impact on the state-wide population. The current issues are welfare related and the Department is working with the community and other agencies to address them.
9. The KHP and the allocation of quota has been set up so that quota can be adjusted throughout the year in response to situations that might affect kangaroo populations, such as fire or floods. Harvest zones, or zone segments (local government areas) may also be closed off for harvesting if considered necessary.
10. Based on the current levels of control, information outlined above about kangaroo population numbers and flood impacts we recommend no changes to the KHP or the remaining quota in 2022. A response to Wildlife Victoria has been developed for your approval (**see below**).
11. The Biodiversity Division recommends that brief (MBR048768) seeking approval of the 2023 KHP quota continue to be progressed as is. The Division will assess levels of kangaroo control throughout 2023 and make changes to the quota if necessary.

Context

15. DELWP contractors conducted a state-wide aerial kangaroo survey in September and October 2022. The results of the survey were used to model the total numbers of Eastern and Western Grey kangaroos in Victoria. This modelling estimates that there are 2,363,850. This is an overall increase of 24 per cent from the last survey in 2020.
16. Percentage figures quoted are using population estimates derived from the 2020 survey, as this is what was used to set the 2022 quota and the 2022 estimates have not been published yet. If the most recent estimates are used, the level of the population being controlled would show as a smaller proportion of the population due to the population increase
17. The Kangaroo Harvesting Management Plan provides for changes to the Kangaroo Harvesting Program including the quota when a natural event significantly impacts on kangaroo populations or their habitat.
18. Strict requirements for both programs (KHP and ATCWs) ensure animal welfare and maintain sustainable kangaroo populations. All authorised wildlife control must be carried out humanely, which includes compliance with strict conditions and national codes.
19. The Arthur Rylah Institute recommends a maximum total take of 10 per cent of the Victorian Eastern and Western Grey Kangaroo populations to ensure harvest is sustainable. Ten per cent is considered a conservative threshold, other states set their quotas at 15 per cent.

Consultation

Conservation Regulator

Attachments

1	Wildlife Victoria email to the Ministers for Environment and Agriculture
2	Map illustrating floods and location and number of kangaroos harvested in Upper Wimmera

Draft email to WV

Prepared by: Name, Title ☎ Number

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 5 December 2022 to the Ministers for Environment and Agriculture about flooding impacts on kangaroos. As this matter is in my area of responsibility, the Ministers has asked that I respond on their behalf.

I understand that you are concerned about the kangaroos in Upper Wimmera and particularly at Beveridge Island and have requested an immediate halt to the Kangaroo Harvesting Program and the issuing of Authority to Control Wildlife permits.

While flooding has had localised impacts on kangaroos and their habitat it does not represent a significant impact on kangaroo numbers. The current issues are welfare related and the Department and its partner agencies continue to undertake a range of supportive activities in the emergency response to the flooding to mitigate impacts on wildlife. I thank you and Wildlife Victoria for your efforts in supporting emergency responses.

The total recommended level of control of kangaroos in Upper Wimmera in 2022 is 13,350, which is 10 per cent of the population of this zone. Monitoring of kangaroo control shows that in 2022, as of November 30, less than 6 per cent of the kangaroo population in the Upper Wimmera zone has been controlled. This consists of 5,578 through the KHP and 1,589 through Authority to Control Wildlife permits (ATCWs).

The approximately 2,000 kangaroos euthanised on Beveridge Island in early December represent 1.4 per cent of the population. In total 7 per cent of the population to date in 2022. Across the seven Victorian kangaroo harvest zones, just over 6 per cent of the kangaroo population has been controlled, below the maximum of 10 per cent set in Victoria.

Based on our analysis of kangaroo control across the state and within the Upper Wimmera zone, kangaroo population numbers and flood impact, the Department has decided not to make any changes to the KHP or the remaining quota in 2022. We will continue to monitor the situation and work with relevant groups to make changes if necessary.

Regarding Authorities to Control Wildlife, the Wildlife Act allows authorisations to be issued where wildlife is causing damage, posing a risk to human health and safety or impacting other biodiversity values. Each application will continue to be assessed on its merits in accordance with the requirements of the Wildlife Act. The Conservation Regulator is aware of the impacts of the flooding on species. Should significant population impacts to a species population be identified, the Conservation Regulator will take that into account in assessing applications for Authorities to Control Wildlife. Thank you again for your interest in this matter and your organisations efforts in wildlife emergencies.

Please contact [REDACTED] you have any queries regarding floods and the KHP.

Regards

Sara