

The Animal Care Expert

“Animal welfare by the experts—those who keep, care for and breed animals”



In this issue

- Rabbit virus—update
- Native animal keeping update
- New laws for selling cats & dogs
- *Plus lots more.*



General Meetings

Held bi-monthly

Our next General Meeting is Monday September 9th, 7.30pm. (There will be no July due to meetings taking place at the Complex)
Bill Spilstead Complex, Luddenham Road Orchard Hills—Amenities Building.

General Enquiries:

aca@animalcareaustralia.org.au



Editor's Report

By Michael Donnelly (Editor)

Welcome to our second edition of "The Animal Care Expert" (ACE).

ACE will be published quarterly providing information on current issues, and the progress of Animal Care Australia, to our members.

If there are specific topics you would like to see included in ACE please don't hesitate to contact us:

aca@animalcareaustralia.org.au

I do hope you enjoy this edition of 'The Animal Care Expert'.

Membership Secretary's Report

By Michael Donnelly

Our membership base is growing nicely.

Recently the ACA Committee met and agreed on altering the titles of our pre-existing two separate membership types.

Member—for organisations, hobbyist clubs, etc. These members will hold voting rights; and,

Supporter (previously known as Associate) —for individuals who wish to support and follow ACA and its endeavours. These members will not have voting rights.

By now, everyone (members and supporters) should have received a welcome email along with a Membership/Supporters Pack, and an additional membership application form to be shared with others.

A full list of member organisations and clubs can be found at the back of this newsletter.

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Australia's Biological Warfare on Rabbits – A Brief History

By R.D. Sydenham

The introduction of the European Rabbit onto Australian soil in 1859, by a wealthy Victorian grazier keen on the sport of hunting, saw populations of these animals spiral out of control. Rabbits in their millions were soon competing with livestock for grazing pastures, and were also damaging the environment.

The initial introduction of the Myxoma virus, (Myxomatosis), in 1950, was an attempt to control the rabbit population. This led to a dramatic reduction of rabbit numbers, and within two years of the virus's release, Australia's wool and meat industry recovered from the rabbits onslaught, in which was estimated at \$68 million.

The impact of Myxomatosis gradually declined over time, as the Myxoma virus and the rabbit populations genetic disposition changed. In the 1980's, the CSIRO conducted field studies on Wardang Island after news had emerged of a new rabbit control agent, Callicivirus. It was during these field studies that the new Callicivirus breached its containment, with the most likely vectors blamed for involvement of the escape being bush flies and/or mosquitos. Ultimately the virus did the job of reducing rabbit numbers, as it was predicted and intended to do, which benefited primary production and native ecology.

Like its predecessor, the Callicivirus waned in its effectiveness over time, as rabbits became resilient to the virus, and so a more effective control agent was once again sought after.

March 2017 saw the roll out of the RHDV1-K5 strain. RHDV1-K5 is a Korean variant of the existing Callicivirus, (RHDV1), and is now actively used as a bio-control measure to manage populations of Wild European rabbits across Australia. However, recent studies have shown RHDV1-K5 to be more of a Biocide status than an active bio-control, meaning that the virus is very effective within the field of infection, but is not as effective in spreading outside of its area of delivery.

"Already, the CSIRO are planning on researching yet another form of bio-control, in preparation for release within the next 7 years."

References:

<http://csiropedia.csiro.au/Myxomatosis-to-control-rabbits/>

<http://www.pestsmart.org.au/minimise-rhdv1-infection-in-pet-rabbits/>

In 2015, it was discovered that a wild genotype, (RHDV2), had found its way onto Australia and was also proving to be an extremely aggressive virus. Despite the emergence of RHDV2, almost pre-dating and coinciding with RHDV1-K5 strain field studies, Government departments continued with the RHDV1-K5 strain roll outs. To the displeasure of involved Government departments, the RHDV2 wild type is proving more effective than the government funded researched RHDV1-K5 strain.

Already, the CSIRO are planning on researching yet another form of bio-control, in preparation for release within the next 7 years.

Photo credit: Pest Smart

<https://www.pestsmart.org.au/rabbit-biocontrol-in-australia-key-facts/>



Collateral Damage –Pets At Risk

By R.D. Sydenham

Since the release of the first biological control agent for rabbits, the domestic pet rabbit and meat rabbit industries have been caught in the cross fire.

From 1959, domestic rabbit owners have had to ride out Myxomatosis by providing whatever physical protection they can to prevent their pets from contracting the disease. To this day, there is still no vaccination available, nor has there been any follow up of a vaccine being research and produced to protect pets from Myxoma Virus's within Australia.

Domestic pet rabbit owners and the meat rabbit industry were finally offered a reprieve in the form of Cylap® HVD in 1995, a vaccine for the protection against RHDV1. Like most animal vaccines, It is recommended that pet rabbits are vaccinated with Cylap® HVD every 12 months after the initial vaccination at 10-12 weeks of age. Vaccination can be administered at a younger age if earlier protection is required.

A small pilot study was conducted to evaluate the efficacy of the current Cylap® vaccine against RHDV1-K5 strain. This study showed that there was indeed effectiveness in the protection against RHDV1-K5, or in the very least, no evidence to suggest that the Cylap® does not offer protection. This information was validated by the Department of Primary Industries.

The recommended vaccine regime of Cylap® for the protection from RHDV1-K5 is once every 12 months after initial vaccination at 10-12 weeks of age, or younger if earlier protection is required.

Some vets may advise off-label protocol, which is vaccine administration at 4,8,12 weeks of age then every 6 months, however, this is “off-label” and goes against the recommendations of use of the product by the manufacturer. There is no evidence to support this “off label” use practice to be any more effective than the manufacturers recommended use of Cylap®.

Vaccination should always be administered to healthy animals, and a discussion about the risks/benefits is recommended before vaccination of animals with chronic illness.

The current Cylap® vaccine does not offer protection against the RHDV2 wild type strain, and the domestic pet population of rabbits has been heavily hit by this aggressive strain of rabbit haemorrhagic disease. It does appear, however, that unbeknown to the many domestic pet rabbit owners, hobbyists and meat rabbit breeders, there has been research into the development of a new generation vaccine that will not only offer protection against the wild strain RHDV2 , but will also cover both RHDV1 and RHDV1-K5 strains of the virus. A three in one vaccine!

With research to this new 3 in 1 vaccine rumoured to be complete, we now make the painstaking wait for the registration process through the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority, (APVMA). Any vaccine development needs to involve a commercial manufacturer and requires a range of approvals from regulatory authorities. With these factors in mind, despite the vaccine virtually sitting in waiting, a time stamp on availability cannot be established. In the meantime, all recommended precautions for the protection of domestic pet rabbits against RHDV2 Wild strain should be taken to ensure your pets health.



Suspicious Rabbit Deaths

By R.D. Sydenham

It is important to know why a domestic pet rabbit has died. Finding the cause of death can help establish if the death was caused by a viral infection, and if so, to identify which one.

Even if a rabbit is vaccinated, it will help authorities know if a vaccine that is in production is effective or not, for the protection of that animal against particular viruses that are currently circulating.

If you suspect that your pet rabbit has died from a virus, your vet will be able to take samples. These can be sent to the CSIRO for lab testing. Speak to your vet, as this may be a free service due to the necessity of much needed data in tracking rabbit viruses across Australia.



Further information on the protection of pet rabbits from RHDV is available at:

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/other-animals/rabbit-haemorrhagic-disease-virus-rhdv>

References:

http://kbrspca.org.au/what-is-rabbit-callicivirus-and-how-do-i-protect-my-rabbit-from-rabbit-haemorrhagic-disease_630.html

<https://www.vetvoice.com.au/ec/diseases/rabbit-callicivirus/>

For more information on how to report rabbit numbers, disease and dead rabbits, visit:

<https://www.pestsmart.org.au/report-rabbit-numbers-disease-dead-rabbits/>

Photo credit: Aimee Heywood

Important Horse issues in the media

By Karri Nadazdy

ACA's horses representative has been very active in recent months, as there have been some important horse issues in the media.

The National Horse Register Inquiry closed to submissions on 5th May. ACA prepared a very detailed submission from the perspective of horse owners and keepers in the recreational horse industry.

In addition to answering the four questions asked by the Inquiry, ACA made the following recommendations:

- 1: All Horse related legislation in Australia is updated and consolidated into one National document that is consistent across all states and for all Horses.
- 2: The National Horse Register is introduced as an integral part of the new National legislation
- 3: A government funded Department is created to regulate the horse industry in Australia, maintain the Register, provide education and respond to the issues that the register reveals

ACA demonstrated in the submission that without also implementing the above recommendations, the Register on its own was not feasible, and was not capable of resolving the issues it intended to address.

As many political parties have already made election promises to support the creation of an Independent Office of Animal Welfare, ACA's recommendations are not at all unrealistic. If these promises are upheld, and a National Register does go ahead, it could lead to significant improvements to horse welfare in Australia, and provide some much needed consistency.

52 submissions were received by the Inquiry Committee, and they can viewed here:

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Rural_and_Regional_Affairs_and_Transport/NationalHorseRegister/Submissions

At the time of writing, a submission is being provided for the Barmah Strategic Action Plan. Public consultation on the management of feral horses in Barmah National Park and Forest closed on 30th May.

ACA does not support the aerial culling of these horses, due to welfare concerns and environmental impacts. ACA does not object to controlled management and humane methods of population reduction, when necessary. Many countries overseas utilise wild horse herds in carefully managed programs to successfully regenerate wilderness areas and grasslands to the benefit of native species. Australia is behind the world standard in land management and could easily adapt these holistic, practical examples, to suit our native landscapes.

Responses and a Summary Report will be available late 2019 at the Barmah Strategic Action Plan website: <https://engage.vic.gov.au/barmah-strategic-action-plan>

If your equestrian organisation would like to contribute to ACA's efforts to improve horse welfare in Australia, you are invited to join ACA, and be a part of the discussions.

Photo Credit:
<https://engage.vic.gov.au/barmah-strategic-action-plan>



Native animal keeping licenses in NSW update.

By Michael Donnelly & Mitchell Hodgson

In 2014, The Independent Biodiversity Legislation Review Panel (IBLRP) was commissioned to produce a report for the NSW government on how environmental regulators could best focus their time and effort for the greatest net outcome for conservation. The result of that report was the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016, with the primary focus of introducing a risk-based approach to wildlife licensing & conservation.

The first step to implementing the recommendations was taken in 2018 by the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) calling for public consultation on the intended strategies to implement licensing changes. These changes would cover all license classes (from native animal keeping, to kangaroo harvesting) with the risk-based approach as recommended by the IBLRP.

The risk-based approach would in essence, see actions with little to no impact having no licensing regulations whilst actions with a high risk to the environment would be more heavily regulated. It was acknowledged by all hobbyist/keeper groups that in most cases native animal ownership is a low risk activity.

Currently native animal licenses and the species within each are separated into classes according to the 'degree of difficulty or level of husbandry' required to maintain the welfare of those species. In regards to reptiles, the license classes range from R1 (basic) to R5 (elapid/venomous species). Within the proposed changes certain low risk reptiles (such as Central -bearded Dragons and Carpet Pythons) are to move to a new license class titled 'coded'. Coded species will essentially be exempt from licensing and record keeping requirements. However, a person with a coded animal is found to be in breach of the Code of Practice, they are still prosecutable under the Biodiversity Conservation Act and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (POCTA).

Along with moving several species to the new coded category, some species will be reviewed by an Expert Panel for potential movement to new classes, to more accurately match the level of ease of keeping those species, whilst some other reptiles recognising certain sub-species of taxa already held in NSW, will be added to the Species Lists, to bring an outdated Species List up to date. These species have been legally imported or maintained in the past in NSW, but to date had not been added to the species list, due to

an absence of any Species list updates being carried out by OEH in the past decade. It is also hoped the Expert panel will approve an additional 20 other species that have not previously been allowed to be held by private keepers in NSW.

A welcomed introduction is the creation of a new online management system that is aimed to make administration easier for both OEH and reptile keepers. This new system aims to be more user friendly than the current system, as well as becoming an all-in-one interface for all forms of wildlife licensing – from native animal keeping, to flower harvesting. It is hoped the system will decrease the turnaround time on administrative matters such as advanced class license upgrades and approvals of export/import permits.

One of the proposals within the review was to change the manner in which the dealing of native animals, particularly online by private keepers is to be regulated. OEH and the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) have held no formal position on how to best monitor this practice, however a proposal for the creation of a new class of dealing license was included in the review. This proposal was strongly opposed by all native animal keeping group representatives, and accordingly OEH and DPI determined it would be re-examined as part of the re-drafting of the POCTA Pet shops code review to be carried out by the DPI some time later in 2019.

A list of recommendations has been submitted to the Minister of Energy and Environment where three approaches have been presented for a final decision. The first recommendation will be to implement the risk-based approach system, with the second being to maintain the status quo. Due to quite extensive objection and opposition from the animal welfare agencies (such as RSPCA & WIRES) a third middle-ground option has also been presented.

Regardless of the recommendation approved by the Minister, there is a lot of work still to be done, and we eagerly await further updates from OEH.



Clubs lead reforms to native bird licensing nationally

By Sam Davis

NSW Native Animal Licensing Update.

The proposal to move to a new risk-based approach to NSW wildlife licensing is with the new Minister for the Environment Matthew Kean who is the state MP for Hornsby. We are currently scheduling a meeting with Minister Kean to progress this and related matters.

Officers in charge of the reform process remain confident the reforms will be approved leading to most commonly kept avicultural species not requiring a licence. All birds remain covered by a code of practice ratified by the DPI under POCTA. The continuation of the Native Animal Keepers Consultative Committee, which was in doubt, now looks to be assured.

Further stakeholder meetings have been delayed due to the formation of the new NSW government and their restructuring of various government departments.

SA Native Animal Licensing Update.

A revised set of regulations governing native animal licensing has recently been gazetted in South Australia. We congratulate those involved in the negotiations on a terrific outcome, in particular on the formation of an ongoing consultative committee.

Qld Native Animal Licensing Update.

Advice from those negotiating the Queensland licensing reforms indicate solid progress with an intention to implement the system in September 2019. Essentially the classification of birds into various classes, including exempt, will mirror the supported NSW system. This means private aviculturists in Qld will now have access to species currently only available in other states.



Western Australia - formation of Aviculture Consultative Committee

In WA an Aviculture Consultative Committee has been in the pipeline for some time with the support of Minister Stephen Dawson. A significant role was to assist with policy formation in preparation for the implementation of the new wildlife Licensing system in WA. CCBFA on behalf of WA based clubs have been in ongoing discussions with the WA Wildlife Protection Branch, which has been typically laborious, although recently more fruitful. We look forward to the imminent formation of the committee. Ratifying/finalising the Terms of Reference for the committee will be the first item of business.

Some of the issues for the committee to address that are causing issues for WA bird keepers include:

- Identifying species at the border when 2 departments are involved.
- Renewal/conditions of licences for species held that are not on the basic or advanced lists.
- Inconsistencies with species lists, and for some species not on lists that need to be resolved.

Bird clubs – your representatives!





It's Winter!

Winter for cats means a break in breeding.

By Helen Toovey

The breeding cycle for cats can vary greatly between Queens. A common cycle is every 3 weeks. This means they are "off" for 2 and "on" for 1. In the "on" phase Queens can be overly affectionate, vocalise with loud long meows and posture for the male to name a few of the signs of being "on call". Queens at this stage are very crafty at getting out to find their Man. Doors being opened or windows left ajar makes great escape routes.

As the days get shorter and the nights get longer and the temperature drops most cats take a break from calling. If your kitten or cat is not de-sexed this calling can drive you and your neighbours crazy! Another down side to not having your pet de-sexed is the possibility of uterine infection. This can be life threatening. .

With Spring comes longer daylight hours and temperatures climb and so the breeding starts again.

So if your breeder says it not "breeding season" that's what he/she means.

Spring and kittens go hand in hand.

Important: Changes to the rules from July 1st.

Selling or giving away a cat or dog!

The Department of Primary Industries has introduced changes for selling cats, dogs, puppies & kittens.

Please make yourself aware of these changes.

Go to the DPI website for more information:

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/animal-welfare/companion-animal-welfare/selling-or-giving-away-a-cat-or-dog>

HOW TO: SELL OR GIVE AWAY A CAT OR DOG?

1. Make sure your cat or dog is microchipped
In NSW, you must microchip your cat or dog before it is 12 weeks old or before you sell it (whichever happens first).
Some exemptions apply, visit www.olg.nsw.gov.au to find out more.

2. Make sure your cat or dog is registered
You also need to register dogs by the time they are six months old, and cats by the time they are four months old.
Once you have paid the registration fee, the animal will have lifetime registration, even if ownership changes.
You can register your cat or dog:

- online with the NSW Pet Registry: www.petregistry.nsw.gov.au
- online with Service NSW: www.service.nsw.gov.au
- in person at a Service NSW Centre or your local council office.

Some registration exemptions apply. Visit www.olg.nsw.gov.au to find out more.

3. Consider desexing your cat or dog
Consider desexing your cat or dog prior to selling or giving it away. Desexing can help avoid some unwanted diseases and behaviours and stops unwanted litters.
Some councils will give you a discounted registration fee if your animal is desexed. To find out more, contact your local council.

4. Advertise it for sale using an identification number
From 1 July 2019, you need to include an identification number in any advertisements when you sell or give away a cat or dog.

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au

Member Organisations

AUSTRALIAN INDEPENDENT CAT COUNCIL INC

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL KENNEL CLUB INC

AUSTRALIAN SHOW RABBIT COUNCIL INC

AVICULTURAL SOCIETY OF NSW

BITLESS INC

BLUE MOUNTAINS RABBIT CLUB

BUDGERIGAR SOCIETY OF NSW INC

CANARY & CAGE BIRD FEDERATION OF AUS INC

CENTRAL COAST HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

COLOUR CANARY BREEDERS ASSOC OF VIC

DANDENONG CANARY SOCIETY INC

DOGS NSW

DOGS VIC

DOWNS BIRD BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

FARM ANIMAL EXHIBITORS ASSOCIATION

FINCH SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

GET WILD PTY LTD

GLOSTER FANCY CANARY CLUB OF NSW INC

GULGONG & DISTRICTS AVICULTURAL SOCIETY

HERPETOCULTURAL COOPERATIVE NSW (HCN)

KEMPSEY MACLEAY BIRD CLUB INC

MACARTHER AVIARY BIRD CLUB INC

MAMMAL SOCIETY OF NSW INC

MANLY WARRINGAH AVICULTURAL SOCIETY

MELBOURNE & REGIONAL FIFE CANARY CLUB

MOBILE WILDLIFE EDUCATOR ASS

MORNINGTON PENINSULAR AVICULTURAL SOCIETY

NSW CAT FANCIERS ASSOCIATION

NSW FANCY RODENT SOCIETY INC

PARROT SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) INC

RABBIT BREEDERS ASSOC of NSW

RATTIKINS SMALL ANIMAL BOARDING

REPTILE RESCUE & EDUCATION SERVICE

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN RABBIT FANCIERS SOCIETY

SOUTH WESTERN NSW BUDGERIGAR SOC INC

TOWERS BIRDKEEPERS INC

TOWNVILLE & DISTRICT BUDGERIGAR CLUB INC

VICTORIAN ZEBRA FINCH INC

WAGGA WAGGA & DISTRICT CAGED BIRD SOCIETY

YORKSHIRE CANARY CLUB OF AUSTRALIA

ZEBRA FINCH SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

**Watch out for our
next issue in
September 2019.**

**General Enquiries:
aca@animalcareaustralia.org.au**



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Page 7: <https://engage.vic.gov.au/barmah-strategic-action-plan>

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