

SFAG CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – 2010

Fifth Report:

This is my fifth report as Chair of SFAG, and like last years report I commence this one expressing a high degree of confidence that the Ban on RPM use in irrigated horticulture will take place on schedule in September next year. The reason for my confidence will be outlined in the body of this report.

Concerns over lack of Penalties:

Our main concerns as a committee now surround the lack of any reasonable penalties that can be brought to bear against people who deliberately flout the regulations. We believe that without an increase in these penalties the ban will become a 'toothless tiger'! We will continue to lobby hard for these penalties to be upgraded.

Worst SF season for some time:

Also on the negative side, this last summer and autumn would have to be one of the worst seasons ever in terms of the spread of stable flies and their numbers. They began effecting stock in October and continued right through until May. SFAG committee members spoke to a number of people who expressed their total despair with the situation, even to the point of suggesting that they would sell their properties and leave the Gingin Shire, (and some badly effected areas of the Swan Shire as well).

Return of Dr Dave Cook:

However on a more positive note, this year saw the return of the 'Eminent Entomologist' Dr Dave Cook, who had carried out a lot of the early research on Stable Flies in the Gingin Shire while employed by the Dept of Ag. Dave began working with the Dept of Forensic Entomology at UWA in 2009.

Dave has been able to assist the Shire of Gingin with some practical on-ground consulting on the level of Stable fly breeding in the shire. (We have invited Dave as one of our guest speakers to expand on his work within the Gingin Shire).

Now, with the shire's ongoing support Dave will be able to extend his research and consultancy over the coming summer months.

We are also hoping to receive State Government support for this work to take place and to expand outside the Gingin Shire as well.

Dave has become an invaluable member of the SFAG team.

Political pressure:

The SFAG made a conscious decision to increase our political pressure in 2010 as we believed that it was a crucial year in the lead-up to the 2011 RPM Ban deadline. With this in mind, we have carried out the following activities..

- Attended the information evening with the Premier which was organised by the local Gingin branch of the Liberal Party, at which we asked a question of the Premier..... *“Will the Premier guarantee that the September 2011 total ban on the use of raw poultry manure in horticulture will be implemented on time, as promised by the current Minister for Agriculture on 21 April 2009?”*
The Premier’s answer was an unequivocal – YES!
- Met with our local Federal MP Judi Moylan at another evening ‘get together’ organized by the Gingin branch of the Liberal Party. At this unofficial meeting we were able to discuss the Stable Fly problem with her and she promised us her full support.
- Liaised with Hon Alison Xamon, Greens MP in the Legislative Council of State Parliament, to ask a series of questions of the Minister for Health about the Stable Fly situation. (We felt the response at the time was very disappointing)!
- Met with our local State MP Grant Woodhams to discuss his ongoing support for us in our quest to raise awareness of the Stable Fly issue with politicians. Grant supported our intentions of organizing a petition to go to Parliament. Grant also agreed to organize a meeting for us with the Minister for Health.
- Met with a Principal Policy Advisor with the Dept of Premier and Cabinet, Rebecca Hamilton. We discussed the Premier’s lack of response to our questions, which Rebecca assured us was due to his determination to support our cause with a positive outcome, so until he could put that in writing he was holding off. Rebecca also encouraged us to maintain our pressure on all politicians.....as many as we could.
- Met with the Minister for Health, Hon Kim Hames MLA at Parliament House (in the Speakers room.... thanks Woody). In attendance at that meeting was Mr Jim Dodds from the DOH Environmental Health Directorate. (We felt we received a good response from the minister to our main query regarding increasing penalties under the existing regulations, but we are yet to see any clear response to our questions....)
- Discussed the Stable Fly problem with a number of politicians that I met at various Field Days. Thanks to Murray Nixon for some introductions. Our “Circle of Knowledge” among politicians is expanding.....

The Hard Working Committee:

As usual I am humbled by the ongoing commitment and hard work of our committee.

Unfortunately 2010 saw the resignation of one of our team, Bernie McCarthy, and we thank Bernie for all the hard work he put into the SFAG over 4 years.

On the positive side we were joined by Dr Cook, who as well as imparting a little knowledge, has kept us all entertained at our meetings.

As well as attending the normal monthly meetings, and meeting the various politicians, our committee members have....

- Manned an information booth at the Bullsbrook Fair
- Done the same at the Gingin Expo
- Attended the Moora Biosolids Open Day (Rod and Bill)
- Attended the BAM Act workshop at Moora (Reg)
- Been interviewed on the 91.3 FM radio program 'Talking Horses' (Kate)
- Followed trucks around the Wanneroo Shire to see where they were carting manure to in the 'out of season' period. (The sleuth)
- Met with insurance brokers to ascertain the best policy for our group (Anne and Jo)
- Liased with the Bullsbrook Ratepayers and Residents Association to enlist their support in the fight against Stable Fly (Anne and Kate)
- Attended the Annual General Meeting of the WA Horse Council (David and Kate)
- Made a presentation to the Shire of Gingin Councillors regarding increasing the stable fly budget (Bob & David)

Supporters:

I would like to thank Professor Ian Dadour for his support this year, especially taking time out of an extremely busy schedule to attend a Gingin Shire Council meeting to help present a case for support from the GG Shire for Dr Cook to carry out more Stable Fly monitoring and educational work with the Vegetable Growers in the shire.

I would also like to thank a number of people within the Gingin Shire who as well as supporting the SFAG, have taken time out to attend at least one of our night meetings over the past year.

- The CEO Mr David Burt
- The new PEHO, Mr Trevor Walker
- And last but not least the Shire President Mr George Gifford, one of our key longstanding supporters.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Mike Kokir for his work in monitoring the Stable Fly situation in the Gingin Shire. I'm sure that with Dr Dave and Ranger Mike on the job, that this summer will not be as traumatic for our animals (and us as well) as last year was..... Here's hoping!

Bob Wilson
Chair: SFAG