



THE STABLE FLY ACTION GROUP INC (SFAG)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION UPDATED 1 MARCH 2010

The increase in the numbers and extent of the Stable Fly (*Stomoxys calcitrans*) being experienced throughout the Shires of Gingin and City of Swan is causing widespread concern in the community. The Stable Fly causes severe distress to livestock, resulting in loss of production and major animal welfare issues (including deaths). It also disrupts human lifestyle, especially in rural and rural residential communities, by restricting outdoor activities and severely affecting domestic pets.

BREEDING GROUNDS

The primary breeding grounds of the Stable Fly are raw poultry manure used in irrigated horticulture, and horticultural and turf crop waste. These facts are among the key findings of the government appointed Stable Fly Management Steering Group (SFMSG), which was established in August 1996 by the then Minister for Agriculture, Hon MG House, to “provide direction, coordinate inputs and ensure that the interests as well as the concerns of stakeholders were considered in the development of solutions to the stable fly problem.”

THE SFMSG REPRESENTATIVES & REPORT

The SFMSG comprised representatives from the Departments of Agriculture, Health, Environment and Planning, the City of Wanneroo, Town of Kwinana and Shire of Gingin, as well as the Horticultural, Poultry and Livestock Industries. It was independently chaired by Mr Colin Philpott. A budget of \$300,000 was allocated to fund the Group’s scientific research.

In August 1998 the Group produced its *Stable Fly Management Project Report*, which was presented to the then Minister for Agriculture, Hon MG House. Mr House accepted it and supported it in its entirety.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The two key recommendations of the Report were:

1. *“Banning the application of raw poultry manure to land for either crop production or any other purpose after December 31, 1999, or earlier. After that date, only poultry manure that has been treated to prevent it breeding flies can be applied to land in Western Australia.*
2. *That in relation to horticultural and turf crop wastes, these industries will be required to formally adopt the practices as defined in the “Best Crop Production Practices for Managing Fly breeding and for Using Manure” by December 31, 1999 or earlier.”*

On 6 July 1999, the Minister advised he would not proceed with the necessary legislation to ban the use of raw poultry manure until alternatives for its disposal were in place.

REGULATIONS

On 1 September 2001 the Health (Poultry Manure) Regulations 2001 came into effect. These regulations prohibited the storage, supply, sale, transport or use of commercially derived untreated poultry manure except for the months of May, June, July and August of any year. Thus, an “open season” was implemented, whereby raw poultry manure could legally be used for four months of the year.

REMOVAL OF MAY FROM THE OPEN SEASON

This arrangement proved to be largely ineffective in controlling the stable fly breeding problem in affected Shires during the month of May, when temperatures have been proven to be still warm enough to encourage stable fly breeding, particularly at the break of the season, when rainfall has commenced. Due to the action of the SFAG, May has been removed from the Health (Poultry Manure) Regulations, thus reducing the open season for the use of raw poultry manure to three months – June, July and August.

ILLEGAL DISPOSAL OF MANURE

Safe disposal of raw poultry manure is a serious problem in Western Australia. Many hundreds of thousands of tonnes of it is produced by poultry sheds in Western Australia, and large quantities of it continue to be disposed of illegally.

TOTAL BAN ON RPM USE

In 2006, following a recommendation from the reactivated government appointed SFMSG, the State Government committed to a total ban on the use of raw poultry manure in irrigated horticulture in the Shires covered by the Health (Poultry Manure) Regulations by September 2011.

In February 2010, in answer to a question raised by SFAG, the Premier of Western Australia, Hon Colin Barnett MLA, reiterated the current Government’s support for this ban, as well as stating that should difficulties arise regarding which government department, Health or Agriculture, will take responsibility for the actual implementation of the total ban and upgrading of the Regulations, the Government will draft a new Act of Parliament to overcome the problem.

VEGETABLE CROP WASTE

Poorly managed vegetable crop waste is the second major breeding ground for stable flies. The SFAG, since inception in 2005, has worked closely with industry group VegetablesWA. The Group was invited to have input into the compiling of their *Good practice management of manures and vegetable crop residue* section of their Good Practice Manual, and will continue to support them in their quest for improved practices among their members.

For further information regarding the SFAG and its activities, please go to the Group’s website at www.stableflyactiongroup.org.au

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