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Fly fines offensive

By **DANNAE SYNOT**

THE Shire of Gingin is ramping up its battle against the region's stable fly plague by lobbying the State Government to consider significantly harsher penalties on landowners who fail to adhere to fly control regulations.

Councillors agreed at last week's meeting that the current penalties were not adequate to make property owners – mainly those with commercial businesses – comply with preventative procedures.

The decision follows a report in last week's *Advocate* about the shire's fly offensive resting in the hands of forensic entomologist David Cook, who has been identifying large concentrations of stable flies in the area since October last year.

Shire health and building services manager Trevor Walker said the fly eradication regulations had not been revisited since first implemented about 50 years ago.

"It costs council \$2000 to \$3000 to prosecute (repeat offenders) when the maximum fine for a corporate body is just \$500 for a first offence," Mr Walker said. "But prosecution is the last resort – the Shire will be approaching Health

Minister Kim Hames to consider a penalty increase and to discuss it in Parliament."

While no official tally was available on properties with serious infestations, Mr Walker said monitoring procedures were held on a per area basis.

"Our monitoring procedure spans an 8km radius from where we received a public complaint as it is difficult to pinpoint specific breeding sites," he said.

"Stable flies can usually travel up to 10km in a day for a food source and to propagate."

Mr Walker told councillors that breeding sites had been identified in Sovereign Hill, Woodridge, Redfield Park and a number of coastal locations in re-

cent weeks, with market gardens and piggeries the main offenders.

He said council staff had since advised offending property owners to take preventive measures to eliminate breeding sites. These properties were revisited weekly to ensure compliance was continuing.

If left unaddressed, a stable fly plague can cause major economic loss for farmers.

Mr Walker said the council would continue educating landowners on how to assist in reducing fly numbers.

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