

## SFAG CHAIRMANS REPORT - 2012

I'm going to commence this year's report with the words I used to conclude the 2011 report, "We haven't finished the job yet, but by crikey we are giving it a good crack!!"

I do however believe that we are a lot closer to some real action than we were at this time last year.

The reason for this optimism flows from the action that occurred amongst our political leaders following the momentous meeting at Woodridge in March. The impact that nearly 200 angry residents had on the 4 politicians present as well as the representatives of the Vegetable Industry has been the impetus for some real movement at last.

Since that meeting, the Minister for Agriculture Hon Terry Redman MLA, has grasped the seriousness of the problem and has moved on two fronts.

1. Has been to have the Stable (Biting) Fly declared as a pest under the new Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act. This will see *Stomoxys calcitrans* become the first new pest to be declared under this Act.

The importance of this move cannot be understated. Firstly it means that the Stable (Biting) Fly issue has finally officially been taken under the wing of Agriculture and away from the Health portfolio where it has been languishing in the past.

Secondly, it gives the Stable (Biting) Fly official status which also will see an increase in the penalties available if anyone is deemed to be deliberately breeding this pest, or as is more likely, someone who has been advised to clean up their act and has refused to do so....

(We have said many times that we regard increased penalties as vital as a deterrent to the occasional individual who does the wrong thing. In the past the Local Government bodies have been reluctant to prosecute because of the high cost involved and the low fines available.)

2. The second major step forward has been the implementation of a two year research program that has commenced with funding from many of the players in the SF issue..... DAFWA, VWA, HAL and the following local governments – Cities of Swan and Wanneroo, Shires of Gingin, Dandaragan, Chittering, Capel & Harvey, Kwinana.

The research program will be headed-up by Dr David Cook from the UWA (David will outline the project in more detail in his report)

For the SFAG this has been a seven year journey to get to this stage and despite all the frustrations along the way, we as a committee have been steadfast in our resolve to stay the distance to see some real reforms occur with this problem. (In preparing this report I looked back at my first report in 2006 which noted a meeting with the then Minister for Agriculture Mr Kim Chance, who strongly supported the move to have SF declared under the BAM Act! It has been a long time coming.....!!)

Now, it might seem that these momentous changes just happen, but I can assure you that there has been some furious lobbying over the past 12 months by your committee.

- We have sent letters to the Premier, pressing our case for action on the Stable (Biting) Fly issue.
- We also sent a letter to all other politicians, to remind them of the Stable (Biting) Fly issue.
- We have had the Hon Alison Xamon MLC ask questions on our behalf in the Upper house of parliament (The beauty of having these questions asked is that they have to be officially replied to)
- We met with Hon Terry Redman MLA at Parliament House in the Speaker (Mr Grant Woodhams) chambers
- We met with Dr Sally Talbot MLC representing the Shadow Cabinet at The Maze, in Muchea
- We subsequently met with Hon Paul Papalia ML MLA Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Education at Parliament House
- We met with representatives of the RSPCA at their headquarters in Perth to discuss the Stable (Biting) Fly problem as an animal welfare issue
- We met with representatives of VWA in Gingin to discuss the issue
- We have organised many articles in local newspapers as well as a local horse magazine

All this activity culminated in the attendance of the four politicians at Woodridge in March – Hon Terry Redman MLA, Hon Grant Woodhams MLA, Hon Paul Papalia MLA and Hon Jim Chown MLC.

However, the most important attendees were the affected residents. Many from Woodridge of course but others from as far away as Lancelin, Gingin, Bullsbrook and those representing the Horse Council who came from the Perth Hills. It was a fantastic roll-up and it has been confirmed to me in a number of conversations that this meeting was the true catalyst to getting some real action.

After seven years of lobbying, it seems that a large group of angry voters that call a meeting in the lead-up to an election is the way to get to the ear of a politician!

Is it any wonder that people are generally cynical about politicians.....

I once again acknowledge the tireless contribution of our hard working committee: Bill White, Reg Beale, Rod Withnell, Gary Harley, Anne Sibbel, our new member Kate Lane, and of course our secretary/treasurer Jo Ottaway.

In conclusion I would like to thank Dr David Cook for all his input to the Stable (Biting) Fly problem and his determination to find a solution that can be embraced by all of the involved parties.

Here's hoping that 2013 sees all the promises that have been made actually come to fruition.

