

THE STABLE FLY ACTION GROUP INC (SFAG)
CHAIRMANS REPORT TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
23 September 2014

As some of you will know, this is my Ninth Chairman's Report and as always I remain hopeful that the Stable Fly problem can be brought under control in the near future. We know we will never get rid of them totally as they are adapting to utilize more breeding sources in our local environment. However, I remain hopeful that the research that is being undertaken by Dr Dave Cook ably assisted by Dr Ian MacPharlin, will come up with some solutions.

Both Dave and Ian will present in a little while, however, I would like to acknowledge the financial support for this research that has continued from the Local Govt Authorities of Gingin (the largest contribution), Swan, Wanneroo, Chittering, Dandaragan, Harvey, Capel and Kwinana as well as VegetablesWA (VWA), Horticulture Australia (HAL) and DAFWA.

The SFAG was particularly pleased that all the contributors agreed to finance an extension to the R&D until July 2015. Our concern is that if the research needs to be continued on past that date, will there be more funding forthcoming?

We have also for the last 12 months been operating under the new SF Management Plan which is part of the BAM Act. This MP lays out the management procedures that mainly (but not exclusively) the Vegetable Industry must operate under. The SFAG welcomes the cooperative manner that VWA has worked with DAFWA in educating its members about the MP. (We will hear from John Shannon the new CEO of VWA in a little while also).

While all this good work has been taking place, back at "Stable Fly Ground Zero" many of us have had another pretty horrific season. In my own case it only lasted over the summer months but for others it has been pretty constant for the whole year! This has led to some continuing angst from some of our members directed towards those who are in the positions of authority.

The SFAG has spent a lot of time and effort trying to encourage all those with the decision making power to exercise some diligence in relation to potential prosecutions and subsequent penalties. As a group we remain frustrated that the instruction to DAFWA personnel has been education as the No 1 response. We agree that under the new Management Plan this is a reasonable initial response to vegetable growers who are found to be breeding the pest but with individuals who are using the banned substance RPM there should be NO period of grace!

Your committee will continue to lobby for tougher reaction to people blatantly doing the wrong thing and causing harm to their neighbours animals and livelihood.

Since the last AGM the SFAG Committee has continued to meet every month to monitor how the Management Plan is working and to push for changes that

we see are necessary. In January this year we were joined on the committee by Sandy and Val Pate from Chittering. Sandy is the Regional Landcare Facilitator with the Perth Region NRM and is accompanied at our meetings by his lovely wife Val. With Sandy's enthusiasm we have been able to extend the reach of the SFAG knowledge-base to a much wider audience. Sandy has spoken about SF at three Field Days for horse owners in the south of the state as well as a number of small farm field days. Perth NRM is also assisting with the financing of some updated information material and we thank them for that.

During the year your committee has also attended extra meetings with the GG Shire Council, the GG Shire CEO to discuss SF matters as well as our concerns about the potential new Free Range Egg farm on Cowalla Rd. It seems that this proposed farm has moved into the Dandaragan Shire which isn't under the BAM Act restrictions as far as RPM is concerned. We trust that the Dandaragan Shire will monitor the RPM at the farm to make sure that it doesn't breed SF.

We have also had meetings with the Minister for Agriculture's Chief Adviser firstly and then recently with the Minister Ken Baston himself. These meetings have been organized with the assistance of Shane Love MLA who has been a great support. Shane managed to attend one of our regular committee meetings as well and we thank him for his ongoing support with this issue.

Also at our committee meetings we have heard from a commercial business that is breeding a parasitic wasp that could be of benefit in reducing SF populations in some situations.

We have also had a presentation from Lindsey Strange from DAFWA regarding the potential for SF to come under a RBG (Recognised Biosecurity Group) under the BAM Act. Whilst your committee has some reservations about this, we have agreed to investigate its potential more and will soon be meeting with the Gingin Shire CEO and other interested parties to discuss the matter further.

You may have noticed some new road signs around the Gingin Shire which are urging people to report SF outbreaks to the DAFWA hotline number. These signs came about because the SFAG was concerned that many people had given up reporting SF outbreaks and we felt that with the move by DAFWA to set up the reporting hotline we had a perfect opportunity to re-promote the issue. I know that it has been said that we all realize that there is a problem so we don't need to be reporting it any more. However, your committee is all too aware that if the reports don't come in then the authorities don't believe there is a problem anymore.

This fly season it is especially important to report any outbreak as soon as you have a problem!

I would also urge you to check the SFAG website for updates of information and photos during the year, as over 300 people per month seem to do. Feel

free to join the discussions on our Facebook page, so ably coordinated by Anne Sibbel from Bullsbrook.

Finally, I would once again like to thank our hard working committee for their ongoing dedication to this problem. I have sometimes considered cutting our meetings to bi-monthly but by the end of 3 hours of lively discussion each time we do meet I realize that there is just too much going on every month to consider reducing it.

As always I would like to especially mention our secretary Jo Ottaway whose letter writing skills are renowned around the corridors of power... And also a special mention to Anne Sibbel from Bullsbrook who is tireless in her promotion of this problem within the whole region. Anne has also volunteered her time to join me at meetings with EPA reviewers, Ministers and their advisors as well as being one of our representatives on the Regulatory Reference Group that has just reviewed the first year of operation of the SF Management Plan.

Just on the Management Plan, Dr's Dave and Ian Mac can discuss the management issues, however I will just mention that the 'new' problem of SF breeding in rotting hay was mentioned at the meeting but was rejected from becoming an official part of the MP because of lack of research into the size of the problem. This will be an issue that will be considered in the future if it continues to cause breeding of SF.

Now, back to the committee..... As mentioned earlier it is great to welcome Sandy and Val Pate on to our committee and it is sad to thank and farewell Gary Harley whose work commitments make it impossible for him to attend meetings. Also Kate Lane is taking a year's break from the meetings. We hope to see you back with us Kate, in the not too distant future and we thank you both for your contributions in the past.

Let's hope that Dr's Dave and Mac can come up with some solutions to reduce our animals suffering in the near future.

Bob Wilson
CHAIRMAN SFAG
23 September 2014