

SFAG - CHAIRMANS REPORT 2020

For a group that was formed with one objective in mind, which in our case was to try and reduce the scourge of stable fly in affected areas of the state, when you reach a milestone such as we have now, 15 years since our formation, then you have to question whether we have been at all successful in our endeavours.

As is usually the case when one ponders these big questions, the answer is never straight forward. In some areas the answer is yes but unfortunately in some other areas no....

SFAG has always tried to be a group that not only was good at identifying problems and highlighting them to people who could make decisions that could improve the situation such as local and state governments but we also tried to identify potential solutions to these problems and work with the vegetable industry to promote them.

To give you an idea:

- We strongly supported the scientific research that identified the largescale use of Untreated Poultry Manure (UPM) as fertiliser in the vegetable industry and lobbied to have a ban imposed on its use in irrigated horticulture. This happened in 2011.
- We strongly supported the scientific research that then identified the main problem being the after-harvest waste material that either lay on top of the ground or was slightly buried but in both cases bred large amounts of SF.
- We supported the solution identified in that research that showed that if the vegetable material was buried deeper and then had the surface area compressed with a roller of some sort the flies could not dig out.
- We worked with the Turf industry that developed a system of using small amounts and often of 'amended' UPM, that didn't seem to cause any SF breeding.
- We have also been strong supporters of businesses that have shown the potential to reduce the amount of vegetable material left over after harvest, such as you see here tonight with the composting industry and the new 'technology' of using Black Soldier Fly, to turn that waste material into a useable product.
- We have also strongly supported possible new mechanical means of reducing the source of SF breeding caused by the vegetable harvesting methods themselves – such as the seemingly simple system of lifting that vegetable material pressed into the sand by the tractor wheels. This simple, cheap mechanical device designed by Geoff Slater, the Gingin Shire stable fly inspector, not only seems to markedly reduce SF breeding but it also solves a major problem of potential wind erosion of this fragile coastal sand.

During all this time we have tried to work with everyone that was involved with this problem...

- The vegetable producers
- The poultry industry
- The pig industry
- The Turf industry
- Local Government, particularly the Shires of Gingin and Swan
- The many changing bureaucrats within the Ag Dept.... DAFWA.....and now DPIRD!

- And the many changing politicians that might have some potential to help solve this problem... mainly but not limited to, Ministers for Agriculture

Many of these people were genuinely interested in trying to solve this 'diabolical problem' of stable fly breeding in the horticulture industry.

Unfortunately, during all those 15 years we have had some vegetable producers who have done absolutely nothing to try and solve this problem themselves, or even to just reduce the potential breeding sites. In fact some seemed to go out of their way to make the problem worse.

This currently appears to be the case with what seems to be a deliberate re-introduction of Untreated PM into irrigated horticulture. Some vegetable growers seem to be interpreting the clause in the SFMP 2019 that allows 'Treated Poultry Manure' to be used to re-introduce the use of large quantities of manure that has not been treated, gambling that they won't be prosecuted by DPIRD.

To those individuals, all I can say is SHAME ON YOU!

We on the SFAG committee however, will continue to look for positive solutions to this problem, reach out and support those glimmers of hope that show up in the form of people like those you see here tonight in composter Donovan Farrell, Black Soldier fly entrepreneur Luke Wheat and innovator Geoff Slater, while also supporting those organisations that are charged with monitoring and penalising wrong do-ers, such as the Shire of Gingin and others.

SFAG is a staunchly apolitical organisation but we are also very thankful to those politicians that have supported our cause over the years such as Alison Xamon MLC from the Greens WA, Jim Chown MLC and Frank Alban MLA from the Liberals, the National's Terry Redmond MLA (when he was minister was instrumental in helping us achieve Declared Pest status for stable flies), Martin Aldridge MLC, Grant Woodhams MLA, and in more recent times Shane Love MLA.

While the SFAG committee has seen some personnel changes over those 15 years there is a small core who have been with us from the start and will probably be with us when we decide that our work is done.... Thanks Jo Ottaway and Bill White.... It's been a frustrating ride at times but it's been great having you on board. To the hard working and dedicated members of the community that have been on the committee over the years and have had to move on, I thank you. As well as a big thankyou to the current committee members who give us such support.

While on thankyou, SFAG would like to thank the Shire of Gingin for supporting us with public liability insurance through its Community Grants programme, and the Shire ratepayers for their support of the stable fly rates levy which enables the employment of a dedicated stable fly inspector.

Also, our erstwhile secretary is currently writing up the history of the dedicated work that has been done over 30 years to combat the stable fly problem in WA - both before and after the establishment of SFAG in 2005 - so this combined effort over such a period of time is recorded for posterity. The first stage, up to the formation of SFAG, is now completed and carefully saved onto a number of computers for safe keeping. This is a huge undertaking of sifting through boxes of past

records and drafting them into a readable form. Thanks Jo for what you have achieved to date and we look forward to the next phase being chronicled....

Finally, a big thankyou to all our members and supporters and be assured that this committee will keep fighting for you and your animals that have been suffering from this scourge for so long!

Bob Wilson

CHAIRMAN

13 October 2020