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The Australian Rangeland Society

AUSTRALIAN NATURE CONSERVATION AGENCY: INVASIVE SPECIES PROGRAM

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Feral animals and environmental weeds are identified clearly as one of the most significant threats to the conservation of Australia's biodiversity, and accordingly, the management of invasive animals, plants and marine organisms are key components of maintaining and enhancing biodiversity. The Australian Nature Conservation Agency (ANCA), through the Invasive Species Program (ISP), will coordinate action on these issues.

Priorities for the Invasive Species Program are to:

- develop and implement national Threat Abatement Plans for species listed as key threatening processes under the *Endangered Species Protection Act 1992*;
- develop a comprehensive framework for the management of invasive species in the context of maintenance and recovery of the Australian landscape;
- involve all key interest groups to develop partnerships between governments, the community and individuals to address invasive species impact in a whole landscape context.

At present the three components of the Invasive Species Program, feral pests, environmental weeds and marine invasive species, are at quite different stages of development. The feral animal program within ANCA is well developed. At present the weed part of the Invasive Species Program is focussed on two areas: development with AQIS of a system to control weed imports and obtaining some baseline information on the current state of knowledge of the impact of environmental weeds on nature conservation values. Marine pest issues are not well understood at present and ANCA is currently liaising with the Centre for Research in Marine Pests at CSIRO in Hobart with a view to developing a more comprehensive understanding of the current status and issues associated with the management of marine pests.

The Invasive Species Program provides for nationally coordinated management of those key threatening processes listed in the Act. The Threat Abatement Plans offer a framework for a national response to the threats to nationally endangered and vulnerable species and communities.

Predation by foxes and feral cats and competition and land degradation by feral rabbits and feral goats are listed as key threatening processes under the *Endangered Species Protection Act 1992*. The Act requires the preparation and implementation of Threat Abatement Plans (TAPs) to enable nationally coordinated management of those processes listed. The TAP for foxes is expected to be finalised by the end of 1996, with the remaining TAPs for the feral cat, rabbits and feral goats to be completed in 1997.

The Invasive Species Program is developing partnerships with key industry and government groups involved in the management of rangelands. The ISP is currently identifying issues associated with the management of invasive species that are impacting on nature conservation values within the rangelands.

The environmental weed program within the ISP will coordinate a national cooperative approach to manage the impact of environmental weeds on Australia's flora and fauna. Aspects of the National

Weeds Strategy that cover the environmental impact of weeds will be an important component of the ISP.

The Invasive Species Program is publishing a series of overviews that aim to clarify whether introduced species have a significant detrimental effect on nature conservation values. The overviews will also summarise current knowledge, identify key gaps in that knowledge and provide direction for future research. Available in the series are overviews of the impacts on native species of feral cats, salmonids, feral and managed honeybees and the northern Pacific seastar, *Asterias amurensis*.