



Operational Plan

JULY 2023 – JUNE 2024

EASTERN WHEATBELT BIOSECURITY GROUP INC.

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1 Introduction

The Eastern Wheatbelt Biosecurity Group (EWBG) is an incorporated organisation that commenced in 2001. It now has eleven Shire representatives making up the EWBG membership, the Local Government Authorities (LGA's) stretch from Mt Marshall in the north to Lake Grace in the south. A management group that is elected, direct and manage the day to day operations of the organisation.

The management group work on a voluntary basis, with an in-kind contribution of approximately \$15,000 a year (volunteer's contribution of time and travel to meetings, plus attending bait making days). The EWBG employ a part time Executive Officer, two full time Licenced Pest Management Technicians who are contracted to the group for 200 days per year and one part time Licenced Pest Management Technician as needed. The EWBG gained RBG status in 2015 enabling a more coordinated approach to declared pest control. It operates across community, industry and government and uses a range of strategies and technologies to ensure an impact.

The group is supported financially by the landholders within the groups area through a Declared Pest Rate, the mining company Western Areas LTD (WSA), the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), Industry Funding Scheme, the Member Shires and the State Government.

Achieving success in this role will help Eastern Wheatbelt agricultural businesses to become robust and viable through improved productivity and increased income associated with reduced stock losses and effective declared pest management practices.

1.1 Flat Rate (Fixed Sum)

The Eastern Wheatbelt Biosecurity Group requests that the Minister for Agriculture and Food (as per legislation) determines flat rate (fixed sum) on freehold land in the local government districts of Kondinin, Kulin, Lake Grace, Narembeen, Nungarin, Merredin, Mount Marshall, Mukinbudin, Trayning, Westonia and Yilgarn, that is no less than 20 hectares in area as follows-

20 - 1000ha	-	\$31.47
>1000ha – 2000ha	-	\$47.205
>2000ha – 5000ha	-	\$146.86
>5000ha – 10000ha	-	\$262.25
>10000ha – 15000ha	-	\$419.6
>15000ha	-	\$629.4

The Minister of Agriculture and Food, through the Department of Primary Industry and Regional Development (DPIRD) matches rates collected for the management of WA's Declared Pests.

2 Objectives

The 2023-24 Work-Plan for the Eastern Wheatbelt Biosecurity Group (EWBG) identifies the actions required over the next 12 months to control declared pests in the Eastern Wheatbelt region. It's based on identified needs of stakeholders and payers of the Declared Pest Rate (DPR) and aligns with a range of industry and strategic plans. It's designed to most effectively use the group's resources to manage priority declared pests and to assist the community to meet its responsibilities under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007 (BAMA).

2.1 Our aim (vision)

Community control of community pests.

2.2 Our role (mission)

Protect and support the future of the Eastern Wheatbelt by working with landholders to fulfil their responsibility of managing declared pests on their land.

The EWBG believes declared pests can be better managed by working together as a community in conjunction with industry and government. Through a coordinated approach utilising a variety of strategies and technologies, EWBG can better assist and support landholders.

2.3 Objectives

The objectives of the EWBG are to:

- Control current predation of livestock by declared pests.
- Develop and implement management strategies to minimise future declared pest impacts on livestock.
- Implement best practice declared pest management on private and public lands in the region.
- Increase landholder participation, both private and public.
- Monitor, evaluate and report on the progress towards minimising declared pest impact on livestock in member shires.
- Provide proactive and positive extension activity driven by the group that will facilitate broader community awareness of declared pest issues.

The Eastern Wheatbelt Biosecurity Group is playing a key role in assisting land holders to manage declared pests in the region. Data from a range of sources shows that the Eastern Wheatbelt region has significant populations of declared animal pests that pose substantial environmental and economic risks to privately held farmland, Unallocated Crown Land and river systems.

Declared animal pests of most concern include wild dogs and foxes.

2.4 Wild dogs

Wild dogs continue to cause livestock losses across the Eastern Wheatbelt. Whilst significant reductions in wild dog populations have occurred through the activities of the EWBG, ongoing work is essential to keep populations at a level that will enable ongoing, profitable livestock operations across the region.

Management of wild dogs is in alignment with the *Western Australian Wild Dog Action Plan 2021-2025*. This is an 'industry led and driven plan that considers the economic, environmental and social impacts of wild dogs and identifies the key issues for managing them across Western Australia. The

plan is designed to protect the livestock and tourism industries and public safety and recognises the ecological and cultural values of the dingo.'

2.5 Foxes

Foxes are an ongoing problem causing livestock losses in certain areas of the Eastern Wheatbelt. The EWBG is looking at a range of options, based on the community coordinated biosecurity group model, which places private landholders at the centre of controlling declared pests on their land. This means practical management requires landholders working together to coordinate their control efforts.

2.6 Other Pests

The EWBG is continually monitoring other pests within their prescribed area and recommend landholders report any pests of concern. Currently EWBG doesn't have any reported feral pigs - although they are monitoring in the Lake Grace area. Appendix 2 shows the current known distribution of Feral Pigs in Western Australia and it is important that EWBG is vigilant in their monitoring.

The EWBG will investigate to see what Feral Cat Strategy can be put in place in the future (which is currently already opportunistically managed by the groups LPMT's) and as a result it is evident that there is a return of smaller animals and invertebrates.

3 Background

Through necessity, the focus to date of the EWBG has been on the management of wild dogs.

The EWBG has been very successful in reducing dog predation in the area enabling farmers to enter back into livestock or adjusting sheep over the summer months in the area and thus diversifying the agricultural economic base. In 2000-2001 reported sheep losses were more than 2000 head. This was reduced to losses of 1000 head in 2007-2008 and 69 head in 2021-22.

To date, the EWBG has played a significant role in ensuring farmers can continue to stock sheep in the Southwest of WA. The Southwest of WA which includes the EWBG control area, is one of the only areas in Australia that is marked free of dogs behind the State Barrier Fence. The group aim to continue to reduce stock attacks and losses by reducing Wild Dog numbers, minimise sheep and livestock mortality and the removal of foxes and feral cats will also help to protect native species.

The EWBG is an incorporated organisation that formed in 2001 to help the community across eleven shires to control Declared Pest Species (DPS). These are pests acknowledged to be widespread and established (not eradicable) under the Biosecurity and Agricultural Management Act 2007 (the BAM Act). Under the BAM Act, all landowners are legally required to control DPS at their own cost.

Through achieving the status of Recognised Biosecurity Group (RBG) under the BAM Act in 2015, the organisation has had the ability to generate funds to control pest species at landscape level.

This community coordinated approach helps ensure resources are directed where they can be most effective in controlling pests. Funding for pest control activities can be obtained through private sources, but also under the BAM Act by implementation of a rate on landowners. The funds raised from rates are then matched dollar for dollar by the WA Government.

The EWBG is made up of eleven member shires and each of those members have one representative and a voting right at meetings. The eleven member shires are Kondinin, Kulin, Lake Grace, Mount Marshall, Merredin, Mukinbudin, Narembeen, Nungarin, Trayning, Westonia and Yilgarn (Refer to Appendix 1).

The business of the EWBG is managed exclusively by the management committee comprised of:

- Chairperson: Scott Stirrat (Shire of Narembeen)
- Vice-Chairperson: Jason Davis (Shire of Nungarin)
- Executive Officer: Lisa O'Neill.
- Committee members: Mark Crees, Jim Sullivan, Dean Sinclair, Ron Burro, Steve Hunt and Steve Palm.

The term of a management Committee member is two years from election at an annual general meeting, but the member is eligible for re-election to serve further terms on the Management Committee. The Management Committee must meet to conduct business not less than twice in each year.

4 Stakeholders

Stakeholders of the EWBG include, but not limited to:

- Declared Pest Rate payers
- Local Landholders within the eleven member shires of the EWBG.
- Landholders in neighbouring shires to the eleven member shires.
- Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA).
- Department of Primary Industry and Regional Development (DPIRD).
- Shire of Kondinin, Kulin, Lake Grace, Merredin, Mount Marshall, Mukinbudin, Narembeen, Nungarin, Trayning, Westonia and Yilgarn.
- Australian Wool Innovation (AWI)
- Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA)
- Livestock companies
- Neighbouring Wild Dog Control Groups (CWBA, GNRBA, EBA, MRBA and SBG) – Refer to Appendix 1.
- Western Areas Ltd
- Department of Water
- Local Grower Groups
- Member Shire CRC's

5 Funding

Activities within the Operational Plan will cost \$533,000 to implement from July 2022 to June 2023.

The 2023/24 and future budgets are dependent on the actual rates collected. The EWBG has set a rate that ensures that a budget shortfall is unlikely.

State matched funds (@100%)	\$189,585
Rate revenue (@ 80% collection)	\$151,668
Additional from existing DPA	\$ -
Forecast unspent DPA funds	\$ 42,550
Total DPA funds available	\$383,803

The EWBG have allocated funds for the DPR in 2023/2024 to continue and maintain their current declared pest control activities, the group is currently in a maintenance phase and want to continue this in future years. Specific activities include:

- Carrying out control operations by engaging contractors to manage Declared Pest Species, specifically contracting two LPMTs for 200 days each and one LPMT for 100 days. Promoting best practice pest management to landholders in their area will encourage community participation through events such as Feralscan and Permit workshops;
- Collecting and reporting on dog activity data, e.g. traps, kills, suspected attacks;
- With the assistance of the Wild Dog Project, evaluating data to support in the measure of the success of the RBG. The EWBG will see a consultant to analyse current and past data. The group wants to move from being reactive to proactive through the use of the long-term data they have collected.

- Developing networks and utilising tools (e.g. mobile phone apps) that encourage community reporting of wild dog activity so harm to livestock can be minimised and the ability to run livestock remains viable in the Eastern Wheatbelt and the developing tourism industry and local amenity are encouraged and retained;
- The coordinated purchase and distribution of baits, poisons and trapping equipment;
- Covering the cost and increasing the number of RCP Landholder Permits that are obtained within the EWBG prescribed area to help them meet their legal obligations of controlling Declared Pests on their land;
- Preparation of annual work programs including operational and budget planning; which will be incorporating the outcome of the data analysis and evaluation of past data;
- Meetings required for an incorporated body (e.g. AGM) and review of the group constitution in line with changes to relevant acts;
- Collaborating with surrounding RBG's to maximise Declared Pest Species control;
- Succession planning with board members through capacity building;
- Looking into social licence issues to develop networks and the differences Western Australia faces compared to other areas of Australia;
- Ongoing consultation with the community through various communication and media platforms to gauge desire to control multiple Declared Pest Species, their priorities and report and inform of activities and successes; and
- Management of the group through the employment and upskilling of an Executive Officer.

6 Stakeholder Consultation

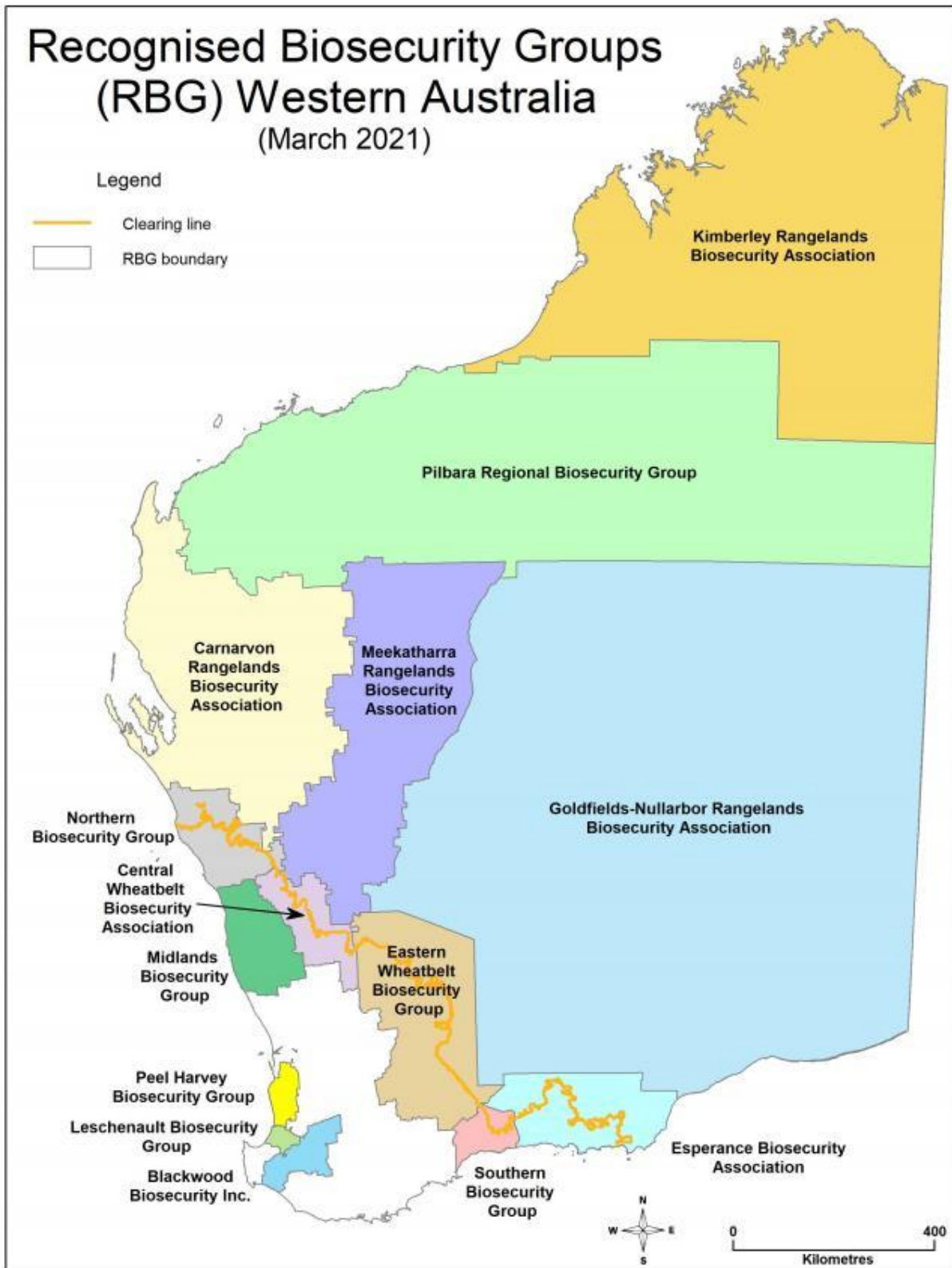
Key messages for high priority stakeholders.

Stakeholder	
DPR payers	What their money is being spent on
	How effective EWBG efforts have been
	Pest management is still <i>landholder responsibility</i> . EWBG is here to <i>help</i> this, with LPMTs, permit process etc. but is not responsible for it.
	Show return on investment in terms of on-ground spend
	Highlight value provided by EO role
	Show how EWBG provides a coordinated approach in a responsible manner, based on local needs and feedback.
	Largely managed by volunteers
Neighbouring RBGs	Communication and agreement around cross-boundary areas
	Opportunities for collaboration (e.g. aerial baiting).
Mining companies	We're controlling the dogs around your camps and helping maintain your buffer
	EWBG is a responsible connection with local communities that provides value for your investment
DPIRD	<p>Maintain direct connection with Minister for Agriculture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly or Annual update to Minister. • New and emerging pests • Challenges EWBG is dealing with • Areas being managed • Importance of fence • This is what we do and how we do it (results delivered) and what we need from you • What EWBG would do with any extra funding • Show what EWBG is doing to help ratepayers and landholders
Industry Funds Groups	Identify potential for support of LPMT
	Highlight value provided and successful model of EWBG
Indigenous Landholders	EWBG is available to assist with information on landholder responsibilities and current best practice or access to LPMT expertise.
WALGA	Understand their interest in biosecurity and where there's potential for leverage
State Biosecurity Council	Represent views to the Minister
RSPCA	Dogs are being managed responsibly and humanely using agreed protocols and best practice (to ensure they continue their support for the Wild Dog action plan).

7 Communication Strategy

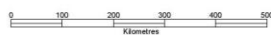
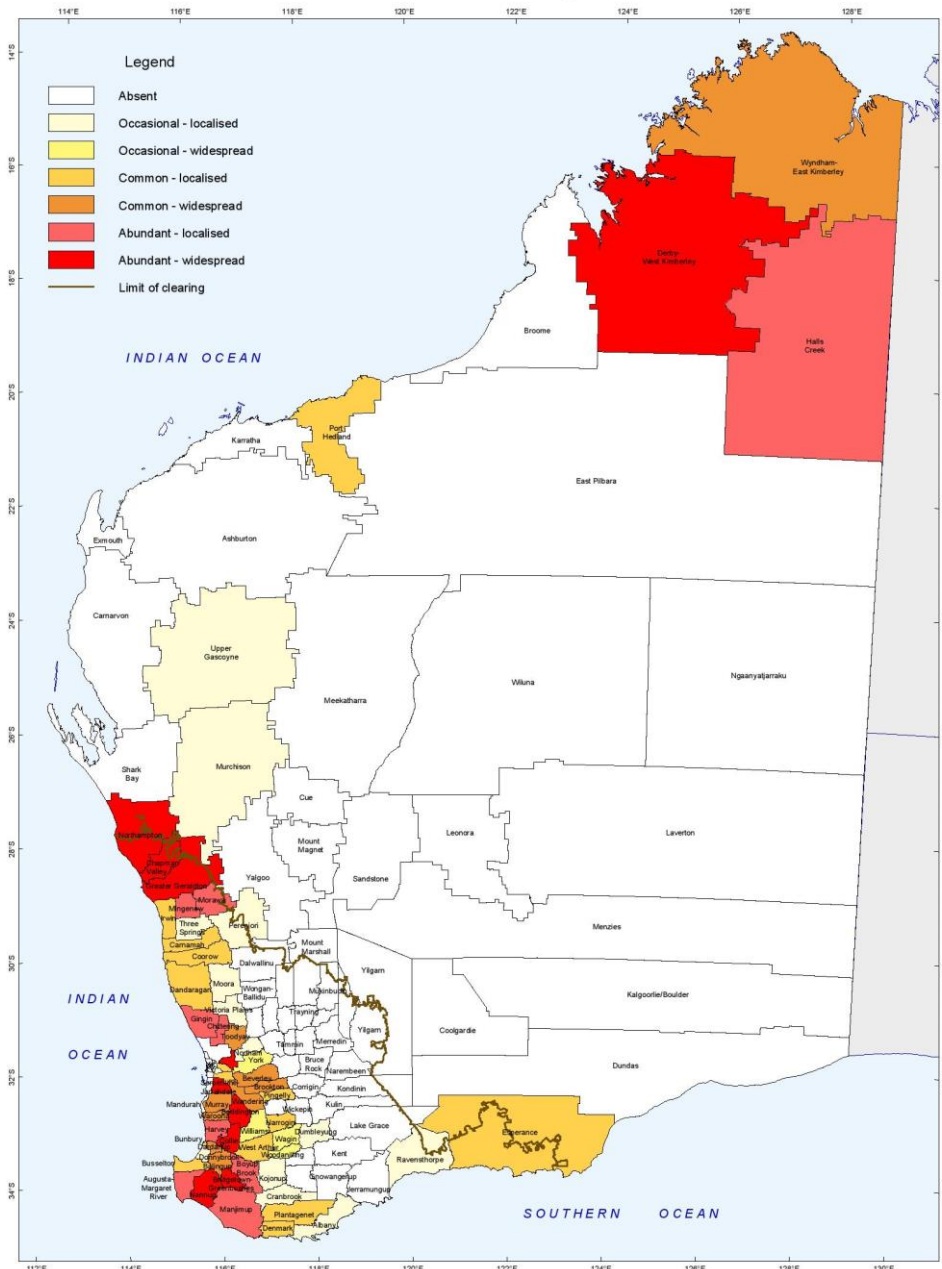
No	Item	Type *	Stakeholder	Resources Needed	Deadline
1	Update EWBG website, include Operational Plan, Constitution, Relevant Links, Contact Details, Media Documents, Dogging Information, 1080 permit information.	Inform	All	EO Assistant	June, 2024.
2	Develop Newsletter which includes key messages, updates & group overview, available for Shires, landholders and stakeholders.	Inform	All		Quarterly.
3	Mailout of Newsletter.	Inform	Landholders	Database of contact details, Printing, envelopes, stamps.	Bi-Annually.
4	Develop a flyer to be used at workshops and advertised at CRC's/ Member Shires.	Inform	Wider Community	Printing, Marketing professional	June, 2024.
5	Obtain key contacts within each Shire – key contact for distributing and receiving information.	Consult	All		On-going.
6	Social Media, Media, Word of Mouth & Agricultural Extension to consult with the community.	Consult	All		On-going.
7	Provide survey and feedback on website for community to provide feedback to EWBG.	Consult	Landholders		On-going.
8	Identify Key Stakeholders of EWBG & identify opportunities to work with those stakeholders.	Consult	All	Committee and Representatives	On-going.
9	Measure how empowered the community is through survey about EWBG practices and tasks.	Empower	Landholders	Survey Monkey	On-going.
10	Maintain existing member Shires.	Empower	Local Member Shires		On-going.
11	Committee Tasks/responsibilities	Empower	Committee Members/Shire Representatives	External expertise	On-going.
12	Policy and Procedure Document (including WHS).	Empower	Committee Members/Shire Representatives	External expertise	On-going.

Appendix 1. EWBG Area of Operation



Appendix 2: Feral Pig Distribution

Western Australia Feral Pig Distribution



REFERENCE:
Projection: Albers Equal Area
Longitude of Origin: 121.00.00 E
Latitude of Origin: 0.00.00
Standard Parallels: 17.30.00 S, 31.30.00 S
Datum: Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994
Date: April 2019
Job Number: 2019127