Operational Plan

2023 – 2024

Southern Biosecurity Group

PO Box 292 0484 932 447

Ravensthorpe WA 6346



**Pests and Weeds**

***Your environment ∙ Your responsibility ∙ Your legacy***

**Table of Contents**

Introduction ...................................................................................................................3

About Us ...................................................................................................................... 3

Southern Biosecurity Group Committee .......................................................................4

.

Stakeholders……………………………………………………………………………….….4

Vision and purpose. .............................................................................................….….4

Declared Pest Rate Area of Operation and DPR range............................................….4

Disbursement for financial year 2024............................................................................5

Proposed 2023/2024 Budget ........................................................................................6

Key action areas for SBG 2023-2024 Declared animals………................................... 7

Key action areas for SBG for 2022/23 Declared plants.................................................8

Key action areas for SBG for 2023-2024 Governance……………………………………9

Key action areas for SBG for 2023-2024 Administration, Community engagement….10

DPIRD Strategic Intent 2022-2026, Community Survey…………………………………11

Communications and engagement calendar............................................................... 12

# **Introduction**

This plan sets out the program of activities for Southern Biosecurity Group (SBG) for the 2023–2024 financial year.

Activities identified in this plan are aimed at achieving strategic priorities set out in SBG’s Strategic Plan (2022-2025), the Biosecurity Management Strategy for the Ravensthorpe Shire with responses to the annual survey forwarded to landholders factored into the plan.

## **About us**

Southern Biosecurity Group is a subcommittee of the Ravensthorpe Agricultural Initiative Network (RAIN). SBG mandate is to coordinate control of declared pest species in the Shire of Ravensthorpe.

We first began operating in 2002 as the Ravensthorpe Declared Species Group. At that time, our role involved coordinating wild dog control in the shire. We achieve good control of wild dog numbers through a range of activities including dispersing of 1080 baits, trapping and shooting.

We believe declared pests can be better managed by a coordinated approach between community, industry and government.

This belief has led to us becoming a Recognised Biosecurity Group through the *Biosecurity and Agricultural Management Act 2007* (BAM Act) which is currently in a review stage. This means that landholder funds raised through the Declared Pest Rate are matched dollar for dollar by the State Government enabling us to provide coordinated and targeted control of declared pests and plants within the shire. The area of operation is shown below.



**Southern Biosecurity Group Management Committee Members:**

As at the 2022 Annual General Meeting of RAIN

* Karyn Tuckett
* Gemma Walker
* Jennifer Chambers
* Reece Laycock

**SBG will continue to collaborate with key stakeholders:**

* Australian Wool Innovation Limited
* Biosecurity Council of WA
* Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
* Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
* Industry Funding Scheme (Sheep and Goat) Committee
* Local communities within the Shire of Ravensthorpe
* Main Roads Western Australia
* Other Recognised Biosecurity Groups
* Ravensthorpe Agricultural Initiative Network
* Shire of Ravensthorpe
* South Coast NRM
* State Natural Resource Management
* Water Corporation Western Australia

**Our Vision and purpose:**

That the Southern Biosecurity Group is proactive in encouraging all stakeholders to adopt sound biosecurity practices.

Minimise the environmental, economic and social impacts of animal pests and weeds on agricultural industry, landscapes and biodiversity values within the Ravensthorpe Shire.

We will achieve this through coordinating a community-based approach to the management of animal pests and weeds.

**Declared Pest Rate (DPR) for the Southern Biosecurity Group area of operation**:

Funds raised by the DPR and the State Government co-contribution will support the commercial, environmental and social values of the Shire of Ravensthorpe community through:

* Improved animal welfare by preventing wild dog attacks on livestock and native animals;
* Add to land values by improving the viability of current and new livestock enterprises;
* Strengthen economic return when selling or leasing land suitable for the running of livestock;
* Safety of locals and tourists walking, sightseeing and horse riding in bushland areas;
* Reduce fox numbers by uptake of baits via wild dog baiting programs;
* Impact on fox and rabbit numbers as part of a collaborative control program, including coordination of an annual shoot and release of RHDV rabbit virus and warren destruction;
* Provision of equipment to trap pests impacting on urban areas;
* Support endangered species conservation, (e.g. numbats and mallee fowl); and
* Prevent the establishment of wild dog populations within national parks, reserves and urban residential areas.

The rate for the 2023/24 financial year will remain unchanged from the previous year, with the following rates to be applied to urban farming or urban residential or urban vacant or urban miscellaneous, on the non-rural valuation roll and rural freehold on the rural valuation roll maintained under the Valuation of Land Act 1978.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Hectare range | Flat rate ($) |
| 50ha or less | $24 |
| >50 – 200 | $39 |
| >200 – 500 | $75 |
| >500 – 1000 | $141 |
| >1000 – 2000 | $200 |
| >2000 – 3500 | $377 |
| >3500 – 5000 | $528 |
| >5000 – 7500 | $698 |
| >7500 – 9000 | $848 |
| >9000 | $1107 |

**Disbursement Financial Year 23/24:**

We are basing this amount on the previous year. For 2022/23, we have been advised by Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development it is estimated that $94,944 (excluding GST) will be raised through the determination of rates in the Southern Biosecurity Group’s prescribed area. The total amount raised is matched by State Government funding. This means it is forecasted that an amount of $189,888 will be available to SBG for the 2023/24 year. The Declared Pest Rate current hectare range and rate will be maintained in 2023/24.

Please note, the figure raised through the determination may be lower than the estimated figure and may vary due to a number of factors, including but not limited to, property subdivisions, changes in unimproved land values, pensioner postponements under the BAM Act or any other applicable exemptions, as determined on a case-by-case basis by the Commissioner of Revenue WA.

**Suggested payment schedule as follows**:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1st quarter | 2nd quarter | 3rd quarter | 4th quarter |
| July – Sept 2023  $94,944  WA Government matching funds | Oct – Dec 2023  $Nil | Jan – March 2024  $50,000 (or funds collected) | April – June 2024  Remainder of DPR received or available in DPA |

**Proposed budget for 2023 – 2024 financial year:**



**Key action areas for SBG for 2023-2024:**

**Actively manage impacts of declared animal species in the Shire of Ravensthorpe. Management to benefit landholders, general public, natural environment, threatened species.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Goal*** | ***Target*** | ***Actions*** | ***Measures*** | ***Date Activity*** |
| Implement actions outlined in the Biosecurity Management Strategy for the Ravensthorpe Shire and the Southern Biosecurity Group Strategic Plan for: | | | | |
| * **Wild dogs** | Continue to coordinate wild dog management activities (e.g. baiting, shooting, trapping, camera monitoring (when required) | * Engage Licensed Pest Management Technician for minimum of 50 days * Comply with State and National Wild Dog Action Plans * Use of Feral Scan * Continue to promote wild dogs as a state-wide issue * Encourage reporting species sightings, tracks, stock losses and other complimentary activities | 20km buffer zone to east of SBF maintained   * Nil or reduced stock attacks * Increase in sightings of native species on all land tenures * Increased landholder confidence to run stock * 2 media of 1080 use for wild dog control ongoing in the Shire | Ongoing  February & July |
| * **Foxes** | Continue to coordinate an integrated program | * Engage Licensed Pest Management Technician - bait on UCL, reserves, parks etc. where no DBCA control | * 2 media notices of 1080 use ongoing in the Shire * Collaborative control in areas adjacent to DBCA activity * 1 fox shoot | Winter:  June -August  Spring:  September - November |
| * **Rabbits** | Continue to coordinate integrated activities  e.g. warren ripping/destruction, RHDV release, baiting | * Encourage landholders to undertake complimentary control activities and removal of debris that may harbor rabbits * Engage authorised personnel to distribute RHDV when required | * Participation in RHDV releases * 2 releases of RHDV * Minimum 2 media prior to RHDV release | March  March-April  August -September |
| * **Feral cats** | * Cat owner education including devastating impact on biodiversity * Reduce threat to native species from feral cat predation * Investigate options for broader landscape scale control of feral cats | * The Cat Act 2011 requirement of identification, registration and sterilisation of domestic cats, to ensure responsible pet ownership, reduce the number of unwanted feral cats in the community * Any control to be humane and undertaken under Animal Welfare Act 2002 * Promote availability of cat traps for loan * Liaise with Rangers at Shire of Ravensthorpe | * Engagement by SBG with community * Anecdotal reports of reduction of feral cats that are living and reproducing in the wild * Control activity noted by LPMT as part of their wild dog report | Ongoing |
| * **State Barrier Fence** | * Collaborate with   DPIRD, EBA and other stakeholders to ensure completion of the Esperance Extension to SBF   * SBF integrity   maintained to prevent entry by declared species into agricultural land | * Pursue updates on Esperance extension Report to DPIRD SBF maintenance issues * Encourage UCL track maintenance to SBF, buffer zone, rock holes * Communicate with DPIRD and SBF Manager on areas requiring attention | * Completion of SBF extension by 2025. Maintenance completed and communicated | Ongoing |

**Manage declared plant species in Shire of Ravensthorpe. Management to landholders, general public, natural environment, threatened species. Management to benefit landholders, general public, natural environment, threatened species.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Goal*** | ***Target*** | ***Actions*** | ***Measures*** | ***Date Activity*** |
| Implement actions outlined in the Biosecurity Management Strategy for the Ravensthorpe Shire and the Southern Biosecurity Group Strategic Plan for: | | | | |
| * **Apple of Sodom** | * Greater Hopetoun area plus new areas identified | * Coordinate control in areas from previous activity including treating newly emerged or missed plants * Collaboration with Water Corp for removal/treatment of plant on their land tenure * Promote the need for control and control options through a range of channels | * A reduction in newly emerged plants due to previous control and seed viability being reduced * Newly identified sites * Media article on species control options | Jan - March and Sept - Dec treatment times when actively growing  Ongoing manual removal and education |
| * **Bridal Creeper** | * Hopetoun foreshore and free camping area to reduce risk of spread to Fitzgerald River National Park * Krystal Park Estate | * Promote options for control of bridal creeper * Use of herbicide and rust fungus *(Puccinia myrsiphylli)* * Liaise with government agencies to advise of species on their land tenure | * Media article on species control options * Reduction in germination * Collaboration identified | March - Sept |
| * **Cactus** | * Control working towards eradicating plant from the Shire | * Secure another funding source to continue Oldfield River control | * Successful funding application | Ongoing |

**Maintain defined and flexible governance structure and processes.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Goal*** | ***Target*** | ***Actions*** | ***Measures*** | ***Date Activity*** |
| Develop additional governance policies as required to meet new legislation | * Operate as an RBG subgroup/Management Committee under RAIN constitution * Develop annual documentation for RAIN AGM and DPIRD * Maintaining healthy membership and composition of Sub-Committee | Review policies on an annual basis – continue to implement and update OHS policy   * Prepare Annual Report, Operational Plan and budget prioritized from Strategic Plan, Biosecurity   Strategy for Shire of Ravensthorpe and annual survey   * Promote SBG to wider community * Current members actively seek new members * Succession plan | * Meeting obligations of the constitution * Support RAIN * One SBG report submitted to each RAIN meeting * Each policy reviewed annually to ensure meeting legislative requirements – update OHS policy to comply new legislation * To RAIN Management Committee prior to AGM to facilitate endorsement * Support DPIRD- provide relevant documents by due dates * Nominations for management committee * New members identified | Operational Plan and previous year Annual Report including audited statement accepted by SBG Management Committee September.  All documents along with Conflict-of-Interest Register presented October RAIN AGM.  Annual report Oct 2021 lodged DPIRD Dec each year  Ongoing |

**Meet all administration requirements**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Goal*** | ***Target*** | ***Actions*** | ***Measures*** | ***Date Activity*** |
| * Administration | * Secure a diversified funding base sufficient to cover SBG operations | * Maintain the Declared Pest Rate * Plan, monitor, report of funding grants at appropriate times * Secure other funding sources as required * Maintain funding register and templates to assist with efficiency for writing applications * Review and update of Biosecurity Strategy for Shire of Ravensthorpe in collaboration with the Shire | * DPR supported across Shire – DPIRD feedback * SBG contact register * Project reports and financial content to each committee meeting * Success across diverse range funding sources * Update content as required – present changes to Shire annually | Ongoing  Quarterly  Ongoing  Ongoing update  shire endorsement and notification of updates |

**Effective communication for well engaged community and stakeholders**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Goal*** | ***Target*** | ***Actions*** | ***Measures*** | ***Date Activity*** |
| * MOU developed with government agencies * Provide value to DPR payers | * MOU Shire Ravensthorpe, DPIRD, DBCA, Main Roads WA, Water Corp WA | * Collaborate with agencies to develop MOU * Encourage annual compliance regime DPIRD (weed inspection etc.) * Articulate need to manage pests and weeds on government and private land tenure * Identify areas for collaboration and seek funding to match SBG in-kind contributions * Promote achievements, awareness relevant pest issues, via displays, eNews, newspaper, meetings, website, guides DPR spend, etc. | * Number of MOU’s achieved * Record control activities by relevant agency * Record Stakeholder engagement in activities * Communication milestones met: * Minimum 8 communication activities: * Annual Newsletter * Annual survey * Regular annual updates * Minimum 1 Biosecurity event annually * Website | Ongoing  Ongoing  Ongoing  Ongoing |

**DPIRD Strategic Intent 2022-26:**

Southern Biosecurity Group through its Operational Plan and budget align with DPIRD Strategic Intent. Specifically, reference to the purpose “enable enduring prosperity for all Western Australians through our work with regions and primary industries”. “Grow our primary industries and regions through balancing social, economic and environmental drivers”.

Item 3, “Dynamic regions and primary industries” – “Deliver systems and support to industry in animal welfare, biosecurity, and ethical and sustainable production to meet community expectations and enhance the reputation of our primary industries”.

**Community Survey:**

As part of developing the Operational Plan the annual priority survey was distributed in September 2022 with our annual newsletter to landowners to gain community input for planning of the 2023/24 Operational Plan and budget.

To date responses have identified the following Priority Species:

Declared Species:

*Some species will require permissions prior to any control being considered.*

* Wild dogs
* Rabbits
* Foxes
* Feral cats
* Bridal Creeper
* Prickly Pear
* Phytophthora Dieback
* Apple of Sodom
* Skeleton Weed
* Galah
* Western Grey Kangaroo – (*approved Wildlife Management Plan 2019-2023, commercial harvest, private agricultural land control)*
* Locust
* Fruit fly *(in some local government areas)*

*Non declared species:* *(outside of Declared Pest Rate permitted expenditure*)

* *Portuguese millipede*
* *Lovegrass*
* *Boxthorn*

**Communication and engagement calendar:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Month | Activities |
| January | Seasonal hiatus |
| February | Community Spirit – article  RAIN e-news, Community Spirit – article species specific plus general information if required  Promote Annual Community Fox Shoot in conjunction with Red Card for Red Fox  1080 Wild dog and fox media via Community Spirit article/advertisement  RBG zoom meeting |
| March | SBG quarterly newsletter, RAIN news, Community Spirit and website  RAIN hosted Research Updates – SBG update presentation  RBG zoom meeting |
| April | Community Spirit, RAIN eNews, website – article fox shoot information  RBG zoom meeting |
| May | Community Spirit, RAIN eNews – article species specific plus general information if required  RAIN e-news, Community Spirit -article species specific plus general information if required  RBG zoom meeting |
| June | SBG quarterly newsletter, RAIN news, Community Spirit and website  RBG zoom meeting |
| July | 1080 Wild dog and fox media via Community Spirit article/advertisement  RBG zoom meeting |
| August | Community Spirit, RAIN eNews – species specific plus general information if required  RAIN e-news -article  RBG zoom meeting |
| September | Community priorities survey and Annual Newsletter  RAIN Spring Field Walk -community consultation  Display at Ravensthorpe Wildflower Festival  Quarterly newsletter for RAIN eNews, Community Spirit, website (include summary Wildflower Show display  RBG zoom meeting |
| October | Draft Operational Plan approved at RAIN AGM  Annual report including audited financial report provided to DPIRD  Community Spirit – article  RAIN e-news -article  RBG zoom meeting |
| November | Cactus Month – promote sightings, SBG achievements, control methods, highlight need for control. For Community Spirit, RAIN news  RBG zoom meeting |
| December | Seasonal hiatus  RBG zoom meeting  Quarterly newsletter, Community Spirit and RAIN eNews, a brief summary of years activity and achievements, Prepare for final edition of paper for year (early December) |