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Date: **21/2/24**
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RMS Document No.:

Request by Detective Senior Constables Les Wallace registered number 26762 and Andrew Wainwright registered number 30877, of the Oxley Rural Crime Unit, for consideration of amendments to Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 No. 200.

BACKGROUND

The NSW Police Force Rural Crime Investigators are regularly involved in the investigation and prosecution of pig hunters who trespass rural properties for the purpose of undertaking their hunting activities. The physical consequences of the offending results in damaged fence-lines, straying stock, damage to crops and pastures, theft of tools, machinery and fuel. Landholders expend significant time and expense to repair fence-lines and retrieve their stock. The psychological consequences to rural landholders are anxiety, fear, anguish and anger.

Hunting dogs used by some pig hunters are caged for long periods of time prior to hunting. Illegal hunters often transport hunting dogs unsecured on the rear of their vehicle. Hunting dogs are often exposed to significant injury from the feral pigs during the activity. Dog injuries rarely have professional veterinary treatment. Hunting with dogs has little to no impact on feral pig numbers, as compared to aerial culls. Hunting dogs generally disperse pig populations into neighbouring properties, which leads to trespass activities.

Diseases carried by feral pigs pose a significant health risk to humans, with the potential for other exotic diseases to be spread.

Section 17 The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 prohibits possession and use of implements which provides ability of the animal to inflict injury to another animal during fighting. The injuries suffered by many hunting dogs from pig tusks are comparable or exceed injuries to be expected from use of the illegal implements.

COMMENT

NSW Police Force allocates significant time, resources and funding to the prevent illegal trespass activities of a minority of pig hunters. Police consider the current measures and penalties are a deterrent only to a limited extent. I regularly engage with rural landholders through property visitation and rural crime prevention information presentations. The majority of complaints expressed by landholders; is the on-going issue of pig hunters illegally accessing their property or intimidating land holders into allowing them to hunt on their land. These issues have hampered NSW rural land holders for decades.

Police request that consideration be given to legislative change, prohibiting the use of hunting dogs to hunt animals and in particular feral pigs. It is requested that consideration be given to mandate those hunting activities as criminal offences, in a similar way bull fighting and other animal fighting activities are prohibited.

Police understand the activity is enjoyed by numerous law-abiding persons and the issue is very divisive. However, Police consider the adverse impact on rural land holders and the risk of exotic disease spread such as foot and mouth disease, are significant factors to consider a fresh approach to the issue.

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RECOMMENDATION

That this report for significant legislative change be forwarded to relevant government agencies, legal services and agricultural advisory bodies, for response and discussion.

Les Wallace
Detective Senior Constable
Oxley Rural Crime Unit
Oxley Police District

7 September 2022

1. The Team Leader, Oxley Detectives.
2. The Crime Manager, Oxley Police District.
3. The Commander, Oxley Police District.
4. The State Co-Ordinator, Rural Crime Prevention Team.

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