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Rural Radio Reports - Animals and birds declared vermin

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Rural Radio Reports

A digest of recent A.B.C. rural radio talks

Animals and birds declared vermin

Animals and birds are declared vermin by the Agriculture Protection Board if they are a threat to primary industry.

Periodically, enquiries are received about the inclusion of certain animals and birds, and the position is reviewed.

The Agriculture Protection Board also contacts all local vermin authorities and Shire councils regularly to ask if they wish the declarations to continue. Several birds and animals have been removed from the list when they were no longer considered problems.

Many authorities wish to have the declarations continued, not so much to lead to organised or mass destruction, but to enable landholders to destroy any of the vermin causing damage.

Some animals and birds are declared vermin for the whole State, while others are vermin only in specified districts.

Reasons for State-wide declarations include:—

- To prevent exotic pests such as Indian crows and sparrows from entering the State.
- To control the entry of birds and animals which may become pests, subject to strict security regulations. For example, ring-necked pheasants and ostriches.
- To control and try to eradicate exotic pests already introduced and established, such as rabbits and wild goats.
- To manage native fauna, such as dingoes, which may cause damage.

Unless pest animals are effectively controlled or managed, desirable native species may be adversely affected. Rabbits and wild goats prevent regeneration of trees and shrubs by destroying seedlings. This reduces the quality and quantity of natural vegetation and deprives native fauna of their habitat.

The essential purpose of declaring birds and animals vermin is to protect our primary industries from further damage.

A. R. TOMLINSON,
Agriculture Protection Board.

Losses from noxious weeds

Weeds can cause serious crop and animal losses. Many of those causing economic losses to agriculture are declared noxious weeds.

Such losses may be brought about in several ways.

- By competing with the crop for water, nutrients or sunlight. This is one of the ways in which skeleton weed reduces yields.
- By contaminating the product. This may be contamination of grain with other seeds, such as saffron thistle, or contamination of wool by burrs such as Bathurst and Noogoora burrs.
- By poisoning. Plants such as Cape tulip, ragwort and heliotrope are all toxic to stock, and may kill hungry animals introduced into paddocks containing these weeds.

- By internal or external injury to animals. Caltrop and prickly pear both cause losses in this way.
- By interfering with agricultural operations. Skeleton weed is again a good example of this, as it interferes with harvesting. Water hyacinth is also a serious problem as it interferes with irrigation.
- By providing a harbour for other pests or vermin.

The cost of eradicating weeds is a form of indirect loss, because it raises the cost of production.

Many of the plants declared noxious weeds in Western Australia are either not present in this State or are found in only small areas. However, they have the potential to become serious problems and regulations aim to keep them out of the State, or eradicate those already here.

J. A. RITCHIE,
Agriculture Protection Board.