



**Submission to:  
Draft Tasmanian Biosecurity Strategy  
2022-2027**



**October 2022**

## 1. Overview

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The RSPCA appreciates the opportunity to provide comment on the Tasmanian Draft Biosecurity Strategy 2022-2027.

We welcome the government's commitment to strengthening the state's biosecurity framework; and we note and endorse the direction outlined in the draft strategy.

In particular, we welcome the government's explicit commitment to 'enable a robust and effective state biosecurity system built on co-operative and productive interrelated stakeholder responsibilities and actions. Where the collective stakeholders understand and support strong biosecurity infrastructure and risk management which adds sustainable value to communities, environment, and the economy'.

The focus on partnerships and shared responsibilities will be vital in embedding the importance of biosecurity as a whole of government imperative. It will also play an important role in reinforcing the fact that biosecurity is everyone's business – and in increasing community awareness of their roles and responsibilities.

The strategy would be enhanced by more specific recognition of the integral role animals play in protecting and enhancing Tasmania's biosecurity status. Furthermore, we believe this review provides an excellent opportunity to focus on the management of animal diseases. This will enable more effective management and mitigation of risks from disease outbreaks into the future.

To that end, we would urge the government to consider the following recommendations:

- Recommendation 1: The vision enunciated in the Tasmanian Biosecurity Strategy should be amended to expressly recognise the role all animals play – perhaps along these lines ... *'to protect and enhance Tasmania's animal and plant biosecurity status for the collective benefit of the Tasmanian community and our industries, environment, public well-being, health, amenity, and safety'*.
- Recommendation 2: Biosecurity risk assessments must be both evidenced-based and transparent. This is essential if allocation of resources for pre-barrier, barrier and post-barrier services are to be effectively allocated to achieve the greatest reduction in the highest priority risks.
- Recommendation 3: The Tasmanian Biosecurity Strategy should include an overarching obligation to explicitly consider animal welfare when managing biosecurity risks and in response to incidents and emergencies.
- Recommendation 4: The Tasmanian Biosecurity Strategy must include a priority focus on effective management of feral animal species, such as deer, poultry, and cats.
- Recommendation 5: The Tasmanian Biosecurity Strategy should be based not only on the concept of shared responsibilities, but also underpinned by a commitment to true partnerships. Those who are allocated responsibilities must be actively engaged in decision-making processes and, where appropriate, resourced accordingly.
- Recommendation 6: The Tasmanian Biosecurity Strategy should include implementation of a comprehensive horse traceability system that not only ensures enhanced biosecurity outcomes, but also delivers additional benefits for natural disaster management and animal welfare.
- Recommendation 7: The Tasmanian government should work with other jurisdictions to deliver traceability and management frameworks that are better aligned and more consistent across species.

- Recommendation 8: Where appropriate, opportunities for co-regulation within the Tasmanian biosecurity framework should be explored.
- Recommendation 9: Consideration should be given the introduction of enforceable undertakings within the Tasmanian biosecurity framework.
- Recommendation 10: The government should investigate the establishment of an emergency response contingency fund.

An overview of the economic value of various animal-related activities is included elsewhere in this submission. It is clear from this data that it is almost impossible to determine an objective value of the total contribution made to the state by animals in their many shapes and forms, and across their many roles.

A conservative 'guesstimate' would indicate this is likely to be in excess of \$2 billion annually in direct contribution, and rapidly rising. This equates to something like 16% of the gross state product, and quite possibly as much as 10% of the state's employment.

However, the precise value is really not the issue. What is important is the recognition of the impacts potential biosecurity failings will have on the state as a whole – economically and socially.

## 2. Matters for consideration

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### 2.1 *Highlighting the importance of animals in Tasmania's biosecurity framework*

In the preamble to the draft strategy, the government identifies biosecurity as being an important foundation to the economic, social, and environmental assets of Tasmania.

The government's intent in developing this strategy is outlined in the mission statement, namely to *'enable a robust and effective state biosecurity system built on co-operative and productive interrelated stakeholder responsibilities and actions. Where the collective stakeholders understand and support strong biosecurity infrastructure and risk management which adds sustainable value to communities, environment, and the economy'*.

The vision for the strategy is stated as *'to protect and enhance Tasmania's biosecurity status for the collective benefit of Tasmania's industries, environment, public well-being, health amenity and safety'*.

These are laudable aims – and ones which we fully endorse and support.

However, the strategy would be enhanced by more specific recognition of the integral role animals play in ensuring that Tasmania's biosecurity system is robust and effectively managed.

Information on the economic contribution of animals to the Tasmanian economy is set out in section 3 of this submission. As well as these tangible benefits, animals also provide a range of non-financial and (in some cases) non-tangible benefits such as improved physical and mental health.

There is no doubt that animal health and welfare are key drivers of our *'communities, environment, and the economy'*. Yet the mission and vision statements as outlined above make no specific reference to the role of animals in achieving these aims.

While some animals may be encompassed in the definition of 'industries', many are not. Companion animals are not perceived as an industry; and nor are our native wildlife. To consider native wildlife as simply part of the environment undervalues the many values that these animals bring to both the environment and the community itself.

Of course, the same could be said of plants – but that is not our core business.

Amending the vision slightly would reinforce the centrality of animals to a sustainable biosecurity strategy.

**Recommendation 1: The vision enunciated in the Tasmanian Biosecurity Strategy should be amended to expressly recognise the role all animals play – perhaps along these lines ... *'to protect and enhance Tasmania's animal and plant biosecurity status for the collective benefit of the Tasmanian community and our industries, environment, public well-being, health, amenity, and safety'*.**

### 2.2 *Increasing the focus on pre-border protections*

As an island state, Tasmania has genuine regional biosecurity differences. The state is relatively free of pests and diseases common elsewhere in the nation and is afforded some protection from newly establishing risks by virtue of relative remoteness. These factors mean we are to some extent uniquely positioned to implement quarantine measures that may not be available to states without similar geographic barriers.

The document notes that maintaining this status for environmental, social, and trade benefit is fundamental to the operation of the Tasmanian Biosecurity System and is at the heart of the Tasmanian Biosecurity Policy.

While the state is at present relatively free of many pests and diseases, climate change and other factors such as more accessible global travel are increasingly threatening to compromise this beneficial status.

The third dot point in the scope section points to actions that *'relate to pre-border, border, and post-border components of the biosecurity system (i.e., the biosecurity continuum'*.

The draft strategy states that *'in assessing, and responding to biosecurity risks, the Tasmanian Government recognises that resources should be allocated according to risk. Thus, resources for pre-barrier, barrier and post-barrier services are allocated to achieve the greatest reduction in the highest priority risks'*.

This is not a new concept – but in the past it has been honoured more in the breach than in the observance.

The old adage of 'prevention being better than cure' holds true in the context of biosecurity. In other words, pre-border measures are the most effective means of preventing pest and disease incursions. It is far more difficult and costly to control or eradicate incursions once they are on-island.

Yet, to date, the majority of effort has been directed to control and eradication of pests and diseases once they have arrived here – and very few resources have been dedicated to pre-border activities.

This has often resulted in less-than-optimal biosecurity outcomes (eg the establishment of blueberry rust in Tasmania). As a result of limited investments in pre-border mitigation measures, attempts to manage pests and diseases are not escalated until eradication is either too difficult or too costly – and decisions are made by default to accept establishment of incursions on-island.

It is vitally important that this risk assessment is both evidenced-based and transparent. This is essential if resources for pre-barrier, barrier and post-barrier services are to be objectively allocated to achieve the greatest reduction in the highest priority risks.

More detailed and sophisticated cost-benefit analyses need to be undertaken as part of the risk assessment process. This will enable identification of the most effective resource investments to mitigate risk.

This will also require strengthening relationships with other jurisdictions - and most particularly with Victoria.

**Recommendation 2: Biosecurity risk assessments must be both evidenced-based and transparent. This is essential if allocation of resources for pre-barrier, barrier and post-barrier services are to be effectively allocated to achieve the greatest reduction in the highest priority risks.**

### **2.3 Recognising animal welfare as a key biosecurity consideration**

The RSPCA believes that, while animal welfare provisions should be maintained in animal welfare legislation, biosecurity is intrinsically linked to animal welfare as disease outbreaks have a health and welfare impact and can lead to mass destruction events. Therefore animal welfare must be given due consideration in the development of a comprehensive and robust biosecurity strategy.

This should include an overarching duty of care to consider animal welfare when managing biosecurity risks and in response to incidents and emergencies. This would ensure that people understand their duties and the important relationship between biosecurity responsibility and animal welfare.

This duty of care will be essential in facilitating proactive responses to early intervention and planning to prevent animal suffering. The animal welfare duties imposed should reflect the physical and mental needs of animals as informed by contemporary animal welfare science.

Reducing risk and protecting Tasmania's agricultural industry as well as the environment, including native habitats and ecosystems, must include a priority focus on effective management of feral animal species, such as deer, poultry, and cats.

Details on the impact of feral animals are set out in section 3 of this submission.

The RSPCA acknowledges that in some circumstances it is necessary to manage populations of wild animals, native or introduced. Any measures taken to manage wild animals must recognise that whether an animal is native, introduced, or viewed as a 'pest' does not affect its capacity to experience pain, suffering or distress.

All biosecurity programs and strategies which prescribe the management of wild animals (such as threat abatement plans and native animal management plans) must be justified, supported by scientific evidence and have clearly stated aims. The animal management methods used for biosecurity must be humane, target-specific and effective. In addition, such programs should be subject to public consultation, ethical approval and review prior to implementation.

Once implemented, the results of these programs should be regularly monitored, evaluated, publicly reported and used to inform future activities.

**Recommendations:**

- 3. The Tasmanian Biosecurity Strategy should include an overarching obligation to explicitly consider animal welfare when managing biosecurity risks and in response to incidents and emergencies.**
- 4. The Tasmanian Biosecurity Strategy must include a priority focus on effective management of feral animal species, such as deer, poultry, and cats.**

## **2.4 Building true partnerships and shared responsibilities**

We welcome the government's commitment to working in a meaningful way with a broad range of stakeholders, as outlined in point 4 of the scope:

*Provide for effective governance, planning and coordination of Tasmania's biosecurity system which encourages true partnerships and shared responsibilities for managing Tasmania's biosecurity risks.*

Tasmania's biosecurity legislation should of course be in line with contemporary understanding of pest and disease management. Seeking advice and consultation from the expertise of individual citizens, industry members, community groups, and traditional owners should be an essential part of the process during the development and adoption of biosecurity regulations.

Consulting community members will facilitate contributions that might benefit biosecurity management by determining more safe, effective and efficient ways of monitoring and addressing biosecurity threats and incorporating the use of modern technologies.

Collaboration in the development of biosecurity management will also solidify the community's understanding of their responsibilities and roles within Tasmania's biosecurity system.

For biosecurity matters connected with animal welfare, experts such as registered veterinarians, animal welfare advocates, people with various industry expertise, and ethical decision makers should be consulted to consider and evaluate management and response plans.

The RSPCA has a key role to play in ensuring that Tasmania's biosecurity framework is robust and inclusive. We are keen to step up and work as part of the overall stakeholder network. However, to be effective, this must be based on a true partnership approach, rather than being simply token recognition or engagement in times of emergency.

We applaud the focus on shared responsibilities evident in the draft strategy. However, this will only be effective if those who are allocated responsibilities are actively engaged in decision-making processes.

In some circumstances, government will need to provide appropriate resourcing to enable non-government organisations such as the RSPCA to actively participate in biosecurity planning and emergency responses.

**Recommendation 5: The Tasmanian Biosecurity Strategy should be based not only on the concept of shared responsibilities, but also underpinned by a commitment to true partnerships. Those who are allocated responsibilities must be actively engaged in decision-making processes and, where appropriate, resourced accordingly.**

## 2.5 Enhancing tools for traceability and assurance

The lack of a central horse traceability system with mandatory microchipping is a major gap in managing biosecurity risks.

Compared to other livestock and companion animals, horses are generally unregulated in terms of management and movement, and there is no overarching traceability or individual identification system for horses.

In fact, a 2018 survey of 505 horse owners across Australia found that almost one in five participants reported that their horse had no permanent objective identifier (eg a brand). (*Thompson et al, 2018.*)

Establishment of a central horse traceability system would produce consistency in biosecurity obligations and align horses with other livestock species. The identification systems already in place for other livestock could be utilised as a model for the community education and roll out of a horse traceability system.

A centralised horse traceability system will be invaluable to enable effective biosecurity management of equine disease outbreaks through knowing how many horses there are in Tasmania and where they are located. The system would be beneficial in the event of a disease outbreak in determining the origin of diseases and would assist to identify where diseases might spread, through tracing the transportation movements of horses.

The 2007 Equine Influenza (EI) outbreak is a significant example of why such a system is required. A joint report by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences and NSW Department of Primary Industries found the EI outbreak spread to more than 10,000 properties and required the vaccination of more than 140,000 horses. (*Ahmed et al, 2020.*)

This outbreak locked the industry down for six months and it took 11 months for the industry to recover. The total cost of eradicating the EI outbreak by the Commonwealth and states and territories was \$571 million, including compensation to offset the disruption to industry. Utilising the report's conservative estimate of cost to industry (\$350 million) brings the overall cost of the outbreak to \$921 million.

This significantly hampered tracing efforts from the initial detection of symptoms at Eastern Creek and the Maitland Horse Event (the next day). It took several weeks to ascertain that horses from the Maitland event travelled to 16 different regions after the event.

Three key issues resulted from not having an accurate picture of the number of horses in the NSW and Queensland outbreak zones:

- Lost time calling property owners to find out how many horses they had;
- Logistical difficulties determining how many vaccines to supply; and
- Vaccine coverage.

If individual identification of horses on a database had existed at the time, the costs of eradicating the outbreak and the subsequent compensation and disruption to the industry would have been significantly less. In addition, the response to the outbreak would have been more efficient, reducing the number of horses suffering ill-health and secondary impacts.

In 2010, after the EI outbreak, the Senate Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee (RATRC) conducted an inquiry into the Animal Horse Industry and an Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA). This inquiry indicated support for the compulsory registration of all horses and the establishment of a national horse traceability register. (RATRC, 2010.)

In 2019, the RATRC conducted another inquiry and released a report titled 'Feasibility of a National Horse Traceability Register for all Horses'. (RATRC, 2019.) This report included 18 recommendations, including a recommendation that "the national horse traceability working group works towards establishing a national horse traceability register that, at its core, serves a biosecurity function".

While biosecurity is highlighted as the priority in terms of a horse traceability system, there are multiple other functions that are both also possible and desirable including assistance with improving animal welfare and emergency response management.

During the 2019 inquiry, Dr Jeffrey Wilkinson, representing the Australian Veterinarian Association, stated that during the outbreak, government authorities "appeared to be flying blind when it came to estimating how many horses were at risk, and how many horses were in the buffer zone to target for vaccination". When questioned about the current ability to respond, Dr Wilkinson acknowledged "we would be flying blind again... we're back to a state of low knowledge."

The results of these two Senate inquiries revealed that without accurate records on the horse population, it is not possible to:

- Plan for disease response such as vaccine volumes;
- Plan for emergencies or natural disasters; or
- Undertake epidemiological research.

In order to achieve the aim and reap the benefits of improved biosecurity, the RSPCA believes every horse must be microchipped and registered on a central database. Without individual identification and data on each horse's movements, exotic diseases such as African Horse Sickness, that has a 90% mortality rate, will not be effectively managed.

Within the context of biosecurity, a central horse traceability system should be able to answer the following questions:

- How many horses are there in Tasmania?
- Where individual horses are now, and where they have been in the past?
- Who is the person responsible for an individual horse and how they can be contacted?

The key components of a horse traceability system are:

- Individual electronic ID via a microchip for each horse that includes contact information on owners and carers/person in charge if required. A microchip is a permanent, unique form of identification and it is imperative that only one type of identification is utilised for consistency.
- A central register that captures horse movement and end of life details. This central database could be integrated with existing industry databases.
- A location identification system such as a Property Identification Code (PIC). The 2019 RATRC report clearly outlines that PICs cannot be solely relied on for a horse traceability system. However, it can be used in conjunction with the above listed individual identification (microchips) and central database.
- Support and education for horse owners and industry to understand their obligations in adopting this system.



**Recommendation 6: The Tasmanian Biosecurity Strategy should include implementation of a comprehensive horse traceability system that not only ensures enhanced biosecurity outcomes, but also delivers additional benefits for natural disaster management and animal welfare.**

Reviewing the state's biosecurity strategy also provides a good opportunity to address current gaps in the biosecurity framework. For example, there are currently different levels of traceability for different species of livestock. Recognising that these frameworks are driven from a national level, there is still scope for streamlining and better alignment.

**Recommendation 7: The Tasmanian government should work with other jurisdictions to deliver traceability and management frameworks that are better aligned and more consistent across species.**

## **2.6 Strengthening the state's biosecurity framework**

If adequate independence, accountability and transparency safeguards are built into the biosecurity framework, the RSPCA Tasmania believes there can be a place for co-regulation within an effective biosecurity framework.

This approach would enhance the strategy's stated focus on 'true partnerships and shared responsibilities'.

There are obvious risks associated with a co-regulatory system. However, these could be effectively managed through appropriate reporting to authorities and audits by regulators. There would also need to be assurances that core regulatory functions such as the investigation of non-compliances and the imposition of penalties for non-compliance are retained by the regulator.

Any proposals for co-regulatory arrangements should be accompanied by a detailed policy that is published on the Department's website setting out requirements for:

- the independence of the co-regulatory body from the relevant industry and individual businesses;
- the approval of the permits, licences and certifications to be audited;
- the number and scope of audits to be conducted;
- reporting detected non-compliances to relevant authorities within specified timeframes; and
- how the Department will audit the co-regulatory body and its processes.

**Recommendation 8: Where appropriate, opportunities for co-regulation within the Tasmanian biosecurity framework should be explored.**

The establishment of a regime of enforceable undertakings would be an important tool in supporting biosecurity compliance and enforcement.

Enforceable undertakings could allow for direct intervention, providing the opportunity for more efficient biosecurity education, awareness and improvement and in cases of animal welfare the improvement of individual animals or groups of animals' welfare.

**Recommendation 9: Consideration should be given the introduction of enforceable undertakings within the Tasmanian biosecurity framework.**

## 2.7 Ensuring the state's biosecurity framework is appropriately resourced

The most serious challenge facing biosecurity management systems is that of funding.

Government budget processes are not designed to deal with 'unknown unknowns'. As a result, funding for biosecurity emergencies is not generally factored into departmental budgets. Agencies are expected to find the resources for dealing with these crises from within existing funding envelopes – which are almost without exception fully allocated.

This can result in risk assessments and management strategies being less than optimal, as funding constraints drive decision making.

This is not a unique feature of biosecurity management systems – it is evident in all areas of natural disaster management.

In reality, emergencies (including biosecurity emergencies) are not actually 'unknown unknowns'. Whilst it is not possible to predict what the precise nature of any future emergency will be, it is inevitable that there will be emergencies. This means that the situation is more accurately one of 'known unknowns'.

The establishment of an emergency management contingency fund within the state budget would enable more effective resource allocation in times of emergencies, and also deliver more sustainable outcomes.

This should be an agreed annual budget allocation segregated for emergency responses. Any unspent funds would roll over each year. Over time, this would allow for accumulation of a corpus that would help level out peaks and troughs in fund management.

The *Emergency Response Fund (ERF) Act 2019* was implemented by the federal government in 2019 was in part a reflection of this concept. The ERF allows the federal government to draw up to \$200 million in any given year, beyond what is already available to fund emergency response and natural disaster recovery and preparedness, where it determines the existing recovery and resilience-building programs are insufficient to provide an appropriate response to natural disasters.

Obviously, the detail would look different in a Tasmanian context, but this would go a long way to achieve the sustainability aims enunciated in the draft strategy and future-proofing Tasmania's biosecurity management system.

**Recommendation 10: The government should investigate the establishment of an emergency response contingency fund.**

### 3. The economic importance of animals in Tasmania

#### Pets and companion animals

Almost two-thirds of Australian households have a pet today, and 90% of us have had a pet at some time. This includes an estimated 5.1 million dogs, 3.8 million cats, 11.3 million fish, 5.6 million birds, 614,000 small mammals, 364,000 reptiles and 1.8 million ‘other’ pets. If this data were extrapolated across all Australian households, it would mean there are more pets than people in Australia.

Tasmania is the state with the highest incidence of pet-ownership. Dogs are the most popular pet, with 45% of Tasmanians living with at least one dog, 34% live with at least one cat, and 16% live with at least one of each. (Newgate, 2019.)

If the amount of money spent is any indication of the value Australian households place on their pets, then they could well be considered priceless.

In 2019, we were estimated to be spending over \$13 billion per year to keep our pets fed, healthy and well-accessorised - with food and veterinary services continuing to account for half of all ongoing expenditure. (Newgate, 2019.)

There is no state breakdown of these figures, but a conservative estimate based on share of population would suggest a figure in the vicinity of \$280 – \$300 million annually.

#### Agriculture and aquaculture

Agriculture, seafood and food value-adding are key drivers in the Tasmanian economy and underpin social and community structures across large areas of the state.

Tasmanian government figures show that the gross value of the agriculture industry at farm gate or beach in 2019/2020 was \$3.22 billion. The total through-chain value for food industries alone was estimated to be \$5.27 billion. (AgriGrowth Tasmania, 2021.)

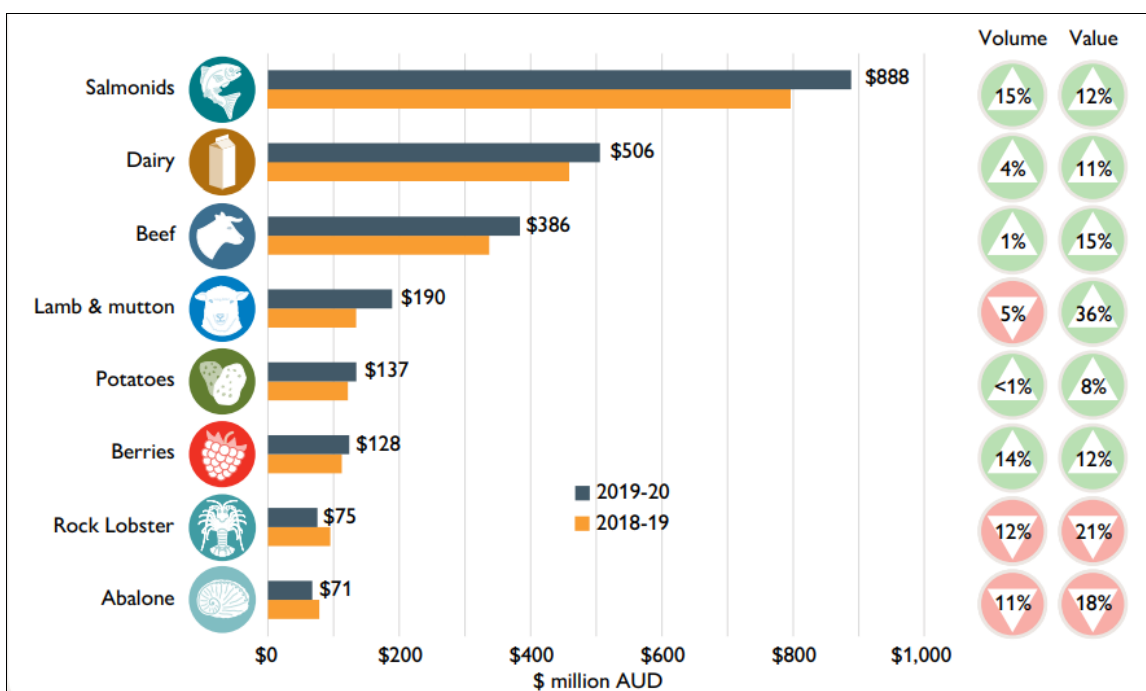


Figure 1: Key contributors to gross food value 2019/2020 (AgriGrowth Tasmania, 2021.)

It can be clearly seen from Figure 1 above that the value of the food-based livestock and aquaculture industries represents the majority of the industry’s economic contribution.

The value of food-based beef and sheep activities was \$1.082 billion. This did not include other livestock production (eg pigs and poultry) valued at \$86 million, or wool (\$87 million). The value of the aquaculture industry continues to increase rapidly, with a value of \$1.034 billion in that year.

In total, this amounts to a conservative economic contribution of \$2.16 billion. This represents approximately 6.5% of Tasmania's Gross State Product, which was estimated at \$34.845 billion. The industry directly employs approximately 6% of the Tasmanian workforce.

## Racing

In 2018/19, the racing industry was said to generate around \$185 million in value-added contributions to the Tasmanian economy. (IEG, 2019)

Racing Code (\$mil)	Direct Value Added	Flow-on	Total Value Added
Thoroughbred	\$48.8	\$41.1	\$89.9
Harness	\$22.2	\$19.6	\$41.8
Greyhound	\$30.9	\$22.3	\$53.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$101.9</b>	<b>\$83.0</b>	<b>\$184.9</b>

Figure 2: Direct and flow-on value-added impacts generated by the Tasmanian racing industry (IEG, 2021)

However, there are significant question marks around the validity of these figures because:

- There are significant problems with the validity of the IER data, as it is based on unaudited data provided by the racing industry itself; and
- It has also been prepared “to meet the requirements set out by TasRacing within their terms of reference”. Thus, the report cannot be expected to provide objective or unbiased data. Rather, it has been produced to portray the industry in the most positive light possible.

Having said that, animals are clearly the basis of this industry. This means that it needs to be taken into account in the context of the state’s biosecurity strategy.

## Beekeeping

Beekeepers provide critical pollination services. The direct value of pollination services was around \$2 million in 2020-21. However, it has been estimated that approximately 85 per cent of around \$164 million in pollination-dependent crops produced in Tasmania such as cherries, pome fruits and seed crops would be at risk without pollination.

Tasmanian beekeepers also produce premium manuka honey and a range of other varieties including prickly box, clover and gum, with an estimated farm gate value of \$12.8 million for honey in 2020-21. (AgriGrowth, 2022)

## Other activities

These figures do not include economic contributions for some other animal-based activities eg:

- In 2019, the recreational hunting and shooting industry was estimated to generate approximately \$39 million directly and a total of \$97 million. (RMCG, 2021.)
- In 2018, the recreational fishing industry was estimated to generate approximately \$97 million pa. (Browne, 2018.)

- No reliable figures are available of the value to the Tasmanian tourism industry of wildlife and other nature related activities eg bird watching etc. However, it is estimated that around \$334 million is spent each year on nature-based outdoor activities. (*Marsden Jacob, 2018.*)
- Equestrian activities include horse riding, horse breeding, eventing, club and association activities. The value of these activities in Tasmania is difficult to calculate. A 2016 study estimated the economic value nationally at \$1.35 billion. On a population basis, that would translate to approximately \$300 million pa. (*Equestrian Australia, 2017.*)
- No estimates are available for the value of:
  - Specialist breed activities eg show societies
  - Working dogs
  - First people's cultural activities eg mutton birding
  - Polocrosse, tent pegging and other related sports
  - Rodeos

### **Invasive species**

Invasive species are those not native to a particular ecosystem. They are introduced either by accident or on purpose and become pests. Invasive species cause extinctions, biodiversity loss and habitat destruction. Management of these pests also creates a serious economic burden. (*Bradshaw, Corey J. A. et al, 2021*)

In Tasmania, the major pest animals are feral cats and wild fallow deer.

There is no reliable estimate for the total cost of feral cat management in Tasmania. In 2015, an unpublished report from the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment estimated annual economic losses on farm from toxoplasmosis alone at approximately \$1.7 million pa.

It's believed there are now 100,000 feral deer across Tasmania, with reports the population has spread into the world heritage area. The annual cost to the community from the impacts of feral deer in is estimated to be as high as \$100 million pa. These costs will continue to escalate as the population continues on its current upwards trajectory.

European rabbits are widespread across the state, as are feral poultry. There is little information about the costs and risks created by the increasing numbers of these animals spreading across the state.

The economic impacts of invasive bird species have not been calculated but these are recognised to be significant and rising. The main species affecting agriculture include skylarks, starlings, sparrows, cockatoos, and cockatiels.

### **Total economic contribution**

Recognising the rubberiness of some of these figures, it is difficult to come up with an objective value of the total contribution made to the state by animals in their many shapes and forms, and across their many roles.

A conservative 'guesstimate' would indicate this is likely to be in excess of \$2 billion in direct contribution, and rapidly rising. This equates to something like 16% of the gross state product and quite possibly as much as 10% of the state's employment.

However, the precise value is really not the issue. What is important is the recognition of the impacts potential biosecurity failings will have on the state as a whole – economically and socially.

## 4. About RSPCA Tasmania

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### Who we are

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Tasmania (RSPCA) is a not-for-profit non-government organisation. We have been working to improve the lives of animals in this state since 1878.

The RSPCA is the only Tasmanian organisation named in animal welfare legislation and we enjoy the continued support of all levels of government.

The community respects our knowledge of animal welfare, which is grounded in science and based on experience. In the 143 years since the RSPCA was established in the state, we have helped hundreds of thousands of animals in need in all kinds of situations: in homes, backyards, on farms, in the wild, and at sporting arenas.

As a charity, we strive to maintain an open-door policy, so no abandoned, neglected, injured, or surrendered animal is turned away or forgotten. Along with cats and dogs, the RSPCA aids a wide range of other animals, including horses, rabbits, guinea pigs, birds, goats, and sheep.

During the past three years, RSPCA Tasmania has:

- Investigated over 25,000 reports of animal cruelty;
- Provided care for more than 6,670 animals; and
- Delivered information to thousands of people on animal welfare, responsible animal care and pet ownership through school, community, and online education.

Our role is to act as a conduit for the community's concerns about animal welfare, to ensure those concerns are heard by our state's decision makers. So, our advocacy activities are a vitally important part of our work

Animals play a significant role in the lives of many people. Most Tasmanians, whether they live in suburbia, rural properties, or in regional towns, say animal welfare is important or extremely important to them.

Many Tasmanians expect improved animal welfare outcomes to be a high priority for the state government.

With an ultimate goal of improving animal welfare state and country-wide, we acknowledge the crucial role of humans in keeping our animals safe.

So, we not only serve animals in need, but also pet parents and supervisors who require guidance and support through education and assistance in relation to domestic violence, aged care, homelessness, mental health, and more.

### What we do

Our strategic priorities are built on the pillars of Animals, Sustainability, and Our People. Within that framework we aim to:

- manage costs efficiently, and grow reliable revenue streams – by removing unnecessary costs and operating within available resources
- achieve the best welfare outcome for every animal in our care – through adopting socially conscious sheltering principles, improving the capability of our facilities, and increasing adoptions and foster care arrangements
- reduce animal cruelty and neglect – through advocacy that delivers legislative change, and community education that improves awareness and welfare outcomes
- reduce the number of surrendered and homeless animals – through increased desexing and microchipping programs, and providing support to people in difficult circumstances
- support our people to do their great work – by building an exceptional workplace culture, and a dedicated network of foster carers, volunteers, and animal specialists.

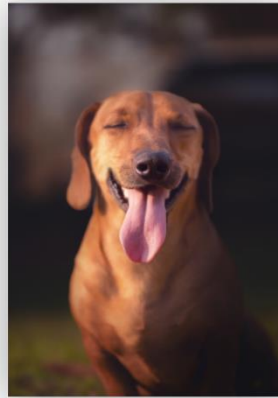
To prevent cruelty to animals by ensuring the enforcement of animal welfare laws.



Through advocacy, to promote the amendment or creation of new animal welfare legislation as necessary.



To develop and promote modern policies using scientific knowledge.



To educate the community with regard to the humane caring for animals humanely.



To engage with relevant stakeholders that enable the improvement of animal welfare.



To sustain an intelligent public opinion in regards to animal welfare.

## How we work

- Our Animal Care Centre (ACC) at Devonport is dedicated to caring for, rehabilitating and rehoming animals.
- Our Adoption and Retail Centres (ARCs) in Latrobe, Launceston, and Hobart are our bases in the community. Animals are surrendered and rehomed through these centres; owners can access advice and supplies for their companion animals; and our ARC teams assist with local microchipping and education activities in their communities.
- Our Inspectorate operates under delegated powers from the state government to investigate and prosecute instances of alleged animal cruelty. Inspectors are co-located with DPIPW in Hobart, Launceston, and Devonport, and operate across the state. This team is supported by a call centre equipped to handle reports.
- Our team of dedicated volunteers assists in all our activities. They serve on our board; they care for animals in our ACC and ARCs; they organise fundraising events; and they support us in many other activities. We could not do what we do without these wonderful people.
- Our corporate office is in Launceston. Supporting our frontline teams, a group of dedicated professionals work across many areas – including fundraising and marketing, policy and advocacy, volunteer organisation, project delivery and – last but not least – our administration team who answer the phones and keep the lights on.

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Latrobe Adoption & Retail Centre: 3/135 Gilbert Street, Latrobe 7307

Launceston Adoption & Retail Centre: 3/207 Invermay Road, 7248

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