



MEDIA RELEASE

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Grants could solve North Qld's pig of a problem

BOB Katter, Member for Kennedy, has joined KAP State Member for Hill, Shane Knuth, and cane growers from Innisfail in a call for grants to be made available to farmers who are desperate to control millions of feral pigs that continue to destroy their crops.

Silkwood cane grower, Levis Campagnolo said the pigs were having a significant impact on profits and immediate help was needed from the State and Federal Governments to establish better control measures.

"If a grant could be available for the structure of fences on our boundary, it would go a long way. We aren't asking for a handout, not a total subsidy, just a grant where the farmer puts some money in, and the government puts some money in," he said.

"We share a boundary with a National Park which we aren't allowed to touch, and it is full of pigs, so and even if you get rid of a sow and boar, within a month or two, the pigs have multiplied and replaced the ones you've removed.

"Once a family of pigs get into your cane, the traps are not effective for stopping them. They learn to know where the traps are and avoid them, and by the time you notice the pig damage, they have devastated an entire crop," Mr Campagnola said.

"There are limited number of pig hunters, which are the only effective way to combat them. If you frighten them away with dogs, they are back within a few days. Poison is effective but we live in a pristine area here and we value the environment we live in and so we want to protect our wildlife and our dogs which have been known to pick up scraps laced with the poison.

"When Panama sprung up here, the banana farmers spent thousands upon thousands of dollars to keep the pigs out. As a cane farmer you are only a small spoke in the industry, but an important one. I know of one farmer who on a hectare crop, by the time she cut it, only got 164 tonnes in a farm that could produce 400 tonnes.

"The pigs chew the bottom of the stalk, it falls over and then they move to the next the crop. They can take one area over a matter of days, so you see the urgency of getting better control measures in place."

South Johnstone cane grower, Craig Darveniza has had some success with trapping but not enough to keep up with the inundation.

"I think it is something that just needs to be done, and soon. We have just got a continuous supply of pigs coming out of the rainforest and national parks. You catch a mob of pigs and within ten days they are replaced.

"We are trapping continuously, and all we are doing is keeping a cap on them."

Mr Katter said he would continue to put pressure on the Federal Government to front up with the funding.

BOB KATTER

Katter's Australian Party

Federal Member for Kennedy



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"The pavement pansies in the metropolitan areas think that nature is fighting for survival, but in the real world, our natural wonderland, North Queensland, is under giant threat from the tens of millions of feral pigs and probably now 12 or 15 million hectares taken over by the Prickly Acacia tree.

"The pig numbers were once controlled in our pig hunting days. On a good weekend, we'd have got maybe 400-500 pigs. But now they rule the roost.

"One trapper/farmer has lost 16.5 acres of cane in the last couple of months and there is no answer for them. The pigs just dig, destroy and desert, back into the environmentalist dreamland called our 'National Parks'.

"National Parks are nothing but fire starters, pig pens and weed nurseries.

"The pigs take out the roots system of banana trees, which is the binder of the soil, and they chew the base of the sugar stems on the giant sugar cane stalks, leaving carnage behind them."

Mr Katter said that culling practices had to comprise a combination of trapping, aerial shooting and recreational pig hunting but that he was opposed to poisoning the pigs given the risk to native wildlife.

"They eat the cassowary eggs, so there is no way that cassowaries, the turtles, the western dunnarts and probably a hundred other species are going to survive with the pigs.

"There is a place for trapping but there is no way in the world you can trap 12 million pigs, and since each female pig can start reproducing at 6-8 months of age having 4-6 piglets per litter, the numbers will just grow and grow and grow.

"God bless the boys that still go out with their dogs and their pig stickers. They might get two or three pigs in a day, but if they went out with their semi rifles, they might get a hundred."

Mr Knuth said this was an issue which had been ongoing for a long time.

"The reality is that KAP have been warning governments and authorities for years now about the feral pig problem," Mr Knuth said.

"It is time to step up and provide more funding for aerial pig shooting and for recreational hunters to receive permits to access state forests and national parks, which are a huge breeding ground for feral pigs.

"We have constantly had the issue raised to us by hundreds of people, including farmers and environmentalist, on the impact feral pigs are causing on crops, our turtles, cassowary and other wildlife and the spread of Panama.

"Now feral pigs are even digging up residential front lawns.

"We almost have more pigs in this country than we have people. It is long overdue for both governments to step up and do something about these feral pests."

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For more information or a comment from Bob Katter, please contact the media phone: 0418 840 243

