

# Australasian Wildlife Management Society

## AWMS Position Statement on Bounties

### Background

Bounty systems offer financial incentives to hunt and destroy pest animals. Reviews of past bounty schemes around the world have shown they are an ineffective form of pest animal control. The main aims of bounties, namely to reduce pest numbers and encourage many people to become involved in pest control, are ecologically and socially flawed. A reduction in pest population numbers does not necessarily lead to a reduction in the damage caused by pests. To collect a bounty, hunters are required to present a nominated body part (such as a scalp or tail). This practice is not only open to fraudulent practices, but encourages the use of inefficient (and sometimes inhumane) methods, but more importantly, it impedes the implementation of more effective methods of control. Most successful pest control requires those with the problem, and that will benefit from control, to own the problem and to be intimately involved in undertaking the management. Bounty hunters usually have no interest in reducing pest damage; their aim is to maximise their profit in relation to their effort. Another major problem with bounty payments is the creation of a source of income that does little to encourage the long-term control or permanent reduction in the targeted pest species population. Bounty hunters usually concentrate their effort in areas where they most easily collect pests. This is not necessarily where pests are causing significant damage. Bounty hunters are also selective in the individuals that they take, preferentially harvesting the younger, more naive animals, and leaving the mature animals to breed and ensure a future stock. Although in theory they seem capable of offering positive benefit-cost ratios, in practice bounty schemes are an inefficient pest animal management tool that require considerable supervision, are subject to fraud and do not guarantee increased pest control or a significant reduction in pest animal damage.

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**Based on the above, THE AUSTRALASIAN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT SOCIETY :**

ACKNOWLEDGES that bounties offer what appears to be a simple solution to pest animal problems by providing financial rewards to undertake control;

RECOGNISES that bounty systems are flawed and do not deliver long-term solutions to pest animal problems

Is CONCERNED that bounties are often implemented with political motivations despite scientific advice to the contrary;

SUPPORTS the concept of best-practice pest animal management which:

- Is based on an understanding of the relationship between pest density and the level of damage and required effort to reduce damage to an acceptable level.
  - Defines management objectives. Objectives should state what will be achieved where, by when and by whom.
  - Selects management options. The management option is selected that will most effectively and efficiently meet the management objectives.
  - Develops the management strategy. This defines the actions that will be undertaken: who will do what, when, how and where.
  - Monitors the success of the program against the stated objectives.
  - Evaluates results against objectives and where appropriate modifying the strategy and management techniques.
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**ACCORDINGLY, AWMS RECOMMENDS THAT :**

1. Bounty schemes not be used for managing the damage due to pest animals
2. Best practice approaches to management are adopted based on ownership of the problem and the solution by those that will benefit from effective pest management.

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