

ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Dunkeld –30th November 2016

Please find grammatical changes to the transcript.

Witness. Mr David Preece Manager, Victorian Petfood Processors.

1 Remove the word potential.

2 Victorian Petfood Processors [VPP] have a number of PrimeSafe, licenced processing establishments. The main site being at Camperdown, the other facilities are located at Hamilton, Ballarat, Seymour and Loch. VPP would be able to process sambar deer harvested from crown land. A set of guide lines and a standard of operation would need to be developed in order to ensure that the deer are humanely destroyed, eviscerated and that the carcasses are delivered directly to one of our sites or placed into field chillers in a timely manner. Ensuring freshness, time and temperature will be a key issue.

Just who will be allowed to shoot these deer will need to be worked out. VPP would find it difficult to manage recreational shooters and receive random numbers of deer at random times of the day, at any of our sites. ie outside of normal trading hours. Management of field chillers may also prove difficult. Persons authorised to shoot deer should be registered as a company preferred shooter and be trained in the humane destruction of deer. Be adequately trained in food safety, and the company quality assurance program.

Removing shot deer from crown land could prove difficult due to the physical size of these animals and the local terrain. I suspect that the shooters would need to design their vehicles in a fashion that would enable suitable storage and handling. Just how many could be shot by an operator each night is unknown. VPP would have no problem processing the deer once at our processing plants. VPP currently process a number of deer from district farmers from time to time. Processing wild deer could be done economically provided the numbers of harvested deer was substantial.

3 The Victorian government introduced a Kangaroo Pet Food Trial back in April 2014 that extended until the end of March 2016. The trial has since been extended until the end of March 2018. VPP had actively pursued the introduction of this trial for a number of years prior to 2014 particularly throughout the Southern Grampians Shire. The first trial was announced without any consultation with the pet food industry. I trust that this will not happen this time. VPP was unable to participate in the kangaroo pet food trial for the first

twelve months due to the inability of being able to export the kangaroo skins. It's a bit like a sheep farmer not being able to sell the wool. But can grow his lambs.

Victorian Petfood Processors obtained a number of wildlife licenced and was given permission by PrimeSafe to process kangaroos harvested from within the designated shires. VPP developed a program where- by the traceability of each kangaroo harvested was available. Individual numbered tags purchased by VPP were applied to each kangaroo at the time of harvest.. Not dissimilar to that system used by other Australian States. VPP has a Licenced kangaroo plat in Hey, New South Wales. As VPP was unable to export the skins it was necessary for us to apply to the Federal Government for a Small Scale Wildlife Trade Operation [WTO] that would enable the export of Kangaroo skins, this was eventually granted in 2015. VPP actively participated in the second year of the first trial processing say 20000 kangaroos.

The trial finished March 2016. A second trial was announced by Jaala Pulford I think and was to extend until March 2018. Some months after the announcement of the extended trial a further four shires were added to the existing list of participating shires. This again caused a number of problems as I now had to re-apply for a WTO that would enable the export of skins from these new shires as well as a new WTO that would enable VPP to export skins derived from the second trial. A lot of paper work. With this second trail came a number of changes. The Victorian Government now provides the necessary tags directly to the farmer. We have no idea as to just how many tags are issued to each farmer nor when these tags are sent to the farmers. And which farmers have tags. Much of the responsibility of record keeping has been put back onto the farmer and the company preferred shooters. The Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning [DELWP] no longer provides a list of permits allocated to VPP which was the case during the first trial. We now rely on the shooters providing the necessary document to the processors. From the processors point of view we have lost some control of farmers permits and this is causing some issues because we forward- sell the meat products.

During the first trial VPP kept a record of all tags issued and kept a record of all kangaroos harvested from each permit. At any stage the controlling bodies could inquire as to just how many kangaroos had be harvested against each permit. During trial one farmers were advised that the tags had been shot out and often re applied for another permit. VPP advised the company preferred shooters that they were only to shoot and tag kangaroos from the farm PIC and its associated permit. **The control of and the policing of this is near impossible due to the hours of which the shooters operate and the lack of departmental personnel.** Prior to the introduction of the First Kangaroo Pet Food trial farmers typically would apply for an Authority To Control Wildlife.[ATCW] that enabled the harvesting of kangaroos however these kangaroos were to remain on the property. Few landowners ever applied for a second permit. **[ATCW] Its common knowledge that many more kangaroos were shot on farm than the permitted number stated on the permit.** The first trial eliminated the potential of over shooting. The extended trial has re-introduced the possibility of over shooting. Today it's possible for a landowner to issue 90% of the tags to the shooter and retain 10% of the tags. These remaining tags could be sent back to DELWP

and reported as not used. It's possible that the landowner may have shot many more kangaroos and not recorded them. The Landowners have no need to re-apply for permits under the new system. The first trial enabled records to be kept and forced landowners to re-apply for subsequent permits. A suitable tagging system should be developed to control the harvesting of deer from within crown land. The issuing and recording of tags is time consuming, I would often spend five to seven hour each Saturday allocating tags to Landowners and shooters. I am sure that it costs the department a substantial amount of time and money to administer the trial.

4 Yes. During the first trial VPP purchased printed numerical colour coded tags. These tags were of the same type used by sheep farmers. Each tag had the following information printed on them. VPP VIC and a sequential number. Each tag and or group of tags were allocated to a particular ATCW permit. The Quality assurance system enabled the tracking and documentation of all tags. A spreadsheet was developed to track the number of tags issued and the number of tags attached to the kangaroo carcasses. VPP could provide information as to number harvested and balance to be harvested. The government issued tags have similar information on each tag and are free to the landowners.

5 The monitoring of tags during the first trial was to ensure that the company preferred shooters were carrying out the control of the kangaroos as per company requirements and to meet government expectations. We still carry on with this tag monitoring during the extended trial however only for the tags issued by VPP. The government issued tags are to be monitored by the controlling authorities. VPP is required to send a list of government tags received into our plants to DELWP four times per year. VPP is required to complete the Protected Wildlife Record book on an ongoing basis.

6 VPP processed close to 20000 kangaroos last year. VPP has the capacity to process 30000 plus kangaroos from those shires listed in the extended kangaroo pet food trial. VPP purchased the Seymour Pet Meat Processing Plant early this year and has a licence to process kangaroos. This plant will enable VPP to process a larger number of Kangaroos. The total number of kangaroos processed will be governed by the availability of landowners' tags, the weather and the ongoing issuing of permit in a timely manner. VPP has plans to extend the Hamilton Pet Meat Processing Plant early next year. This will enable us to process and store kangaroo products and the possibility of more jobs. VPP also has a Kangaroo Processing Plant in Hey NSW. This plant provides a constant supply of kangaroo meat for the production of pet meat. To be used in NSW or Victoria.

7 The regulatory framework in NSW has been established over many years as has that of South Australia and Queensland. All these states have a Kangaroo Management Plan that provides ongoing data regarding kangaroo populations and numbers processed to both federal and state governments. Victoria currently has not been able to provide a kangaroo management plan to the federal government. It's my understanding that Victoria will need to provide this information in order to continue the Kangaroo Pet Food Trial beyond March

2018. Just how many kangaroos are shot per year in Victoria is unknown as would be the case in other states. This is due to the ongoing recreational shooting and over shooting of permits by unknown persons. All tags used for the control of kangaroos in NSW are government issued and all operators are required to complete reporting documentation as indicated by the controlling bodies. Kangaroo skins are required to be tagged at the time of harvest and must remain on the skin at all times. I am not sure if the exporters remove the tags prior to export. It is important that Australia can continue to export kangaroo skins as it forms an essential part of the industries economics. Victorian kangaroo skins are of good quality and a bit thicker than those from other states.

8 Yes probably. That has probably got a bit to do with it.

9 I suspect so. I would think that farmers could carry out their own control of wildlife. Much of South Australia and New South Wales is covered by professional shooters working for the large pet food companies and or the big suppliers of meat for human consumption. Farmers have their own farming enterprisers to concentrate on. Hence the need for professional shooters that provide the service free of charge. Farmers about Hamilton and the surrounding district use to pay for the control of wildlife. As a result of the Victorian Kangaroo Pet Food Trial the control of wildlife is now free to all farmer that obtain permits.

11 The increase in permits could be contributed to the fact that farmers were issued second permits once the first permit was processed. Something that was not normally done during the previous method of kangaroo wildlife control. Some permits may be issued for properties that are not suitable to shoot because of location and or terrain. Those companies currently involved in the processing of kangaroos for pet food should be able to process each Victorian permits issued. Provided that the weather enables farm access and that the farmers pass the tags onto the shooters. Resent months have restricted shooting due to very wet conditions. Most farmers do not like to see waste product. Some large parcels of land in the southern Grampians shire has been cleared of scrub and turned into valuable cropping land that also saw new permits being issued. Due to the lack of monitoring many farmers did not re-apply for permits prior to the introduction of the Kangaroo pet food trial. Once the trial commenced there was a need to re-apply hence bigger numbers.

I suspect that should the trial become permanent the current operators will invest with in the industry, adding further capital that would enables the processing of most permits. Other operators may setup to process kangaroos to meet demand. However they would need to meet all the standards that the government places on them. The use of more filled chillers would be advantages. We were not permitted to use field chillers at the beginning of the first trial as PrimeSafe had made no allowances for the use of such chillers. Field chillers are a necessary part of all kangaroo processing Australia wide. PrimeSafe authorised the use of field chillers once an approved Quality assurance system was put in place by VPP.

12 A field chiller can be fix or portable. Usually a 40 foot refrigerated shipping container that has a number of overhanging rails that enable the kangaroos to be hung by the hind leg. The containers may hold 200 –odd kangaroos. In NSW the kangaroos could be left in these

chillers for 7 to 10 days. Whereas VPP will collect and process the kangaroos every 3 days ensuring a high quality of pet meat. This is due to the close proximity of the chillers in Victoria. Our Hay factory can processed between 30000 and 40000 kangaroos per year the same could be achieved in Victoria.

13 As time and temperature is a major part of any fresh food product. VPP has in its Quality Assurance Manual that all carcasses are to be placed in the field chillers two hours after sunrise if harvested between sunset and sunrise with a maximum of 12 hours between harvesting and placed in the nominated chiller. We aim to bring carcass surface temperatures down to 5 degrees Celsius within 3 hours. Kangaroos can remain in field chillers for up to 7 days but generally we remove them each 3 days, thus ensuring quality product. In most cases we try to bring the kangaroos in under the cover of darkness. This general assists with temperature and has the potential to reduce public concerns regarding the harvesting of kangaroos.

14 VPP has a number of shooters at both our Hamilton and Seymour plants. Most shooters have previously harvested kangaroos for the human consumption industry in South Australia, QLD and or NSW. These states have an accreditation system for the harvesting of kangaroos that has been advantages for VPP. Victoria currently has no recognised accrediting system and it is our responsibility to ensure that the approved shooters are familiar with the requirements within the Standards. "National Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos and Wallabies for Commercial Purposes." Some of our preferred Shooters have undertaken training and accreditation from the OTEN TAFF, New South Wales. I suspect that should the Kangaroo Pet Food Trial be extended beyond 2018 or become a permanent Victorian kangaroo method of controlling wildlife the Victorian Government may introduce a code of practice for Victoria shooters similar to NSW etc.

15 The company has between ten and fifteen active shooters engaged in the harvesting of kangaroos. As our normal beef collection pet food operation is considered seasonal [winter months]. We have been able to provide continual employment for many of those employees. Currently I would say that we have been able to employ an extra 8 persons and maintain extra hours for our existing employees. Good shooters have the capacity to earn \$90,000 Dollars per annum.

16 I think all but two. These persons have been trained by existing shooters.

17 Yes could say that. Currently we are not experiencing damaged kangaroo skins. IE. Bullet holes in the skins. It is a requirement that we report to the Wildlife Department should we find that carcasses are snout head shot.

18 Yes, without doubt. In order to ensure that shooters can in fact shoot straight would better be determined by a third party training facility. Currently any person with a current shooters licence could possibly be a shooter. On-site training may be that a person can shoot a beer can from say 100 to 200 meters hitting the target each time. Or field training by existing preferred shooters.

19 Yes. Recreational hunters would need to be trained similar to that of Duck Hunters and Kangaroo shooters to ensure that the deer are harvested humanely. Training would need to be carried out to ensure that each shooter has the knowledge of how to dress the carcass. PrimeSafe and other government departments would also want training so as to enable full traceability. A Quality assurance systems would need to be put in place. Another point of interest, would be how these deer are to be conveyed to a licenced plant. And depending on the animals size will also cause some issues to shooters. Along with the ability to deliver the deer in a timely way given that most recreational shooters shoot Friday and Saturdays.

20-24 The question of, should Kangaroos be harvested in Victoria for human consumption would need to be looked at if and when the Government were to consider it necessary. **Currently Australia has a number of Human consumption plant that provide kangaroo meat too both the domestic and export markets. All these plants struggle to sell all their meat for human consumption.** Many sell 1000s of kilos to the pet food industry. Generally Australians eat very little kangaroo compared to other forms of meat. The human consumption Industry has struggled to make any large increases in individual consumption rates. Should the export market improve in the future and the prices are favourable Victoria could develop a human consumption industry. It would be costly to set up a human consumption kangaroo plant. VPP would probably remain a pet food producer and continue to process Victorian and NSW kangaroos from both our local and interstate plants as we are currently unable to supply all our customers.

During the past few year we have experienced a reduction in cattle numbers, good weather conditions and an increase in cattle prices. This has produced a shortage of beef pet food products across our industry. With low milk prices dairy farmers have reduced their herd sizes and cashed in on the increased prices. From say last year at \$600.00 to \$900.00 dollars to currently \$1200.00 to \$1500.00 dollars

25 VPP processes kangaroos, bovine and equine animals including the odd camel. However bovine cattle is the largest proportion of our pet food. We do not process pigs as we are unable to on forward the waste pig material.

26 **Kangaroo skins are a commodity that has a commercial value which is usually exported.** It also forms a part of kangaroo processing and enables some cost recovery and aids profitability. These skins may have a value of between \$3 and \$5 dollars. Each skin helps the bottom line. When you get 20 000 skins times\$3, it's a significant amount.

27 That's not my area of expertise, but I would say a third may be a bit less.

28-42 During both the first trial and now the second trial the Government has not paid any one in the harvesting process. All cost are those of the licenced operators and shooters. During the first trial and to some extent the current trial VPP purchases 1000s of tags at our cost, also administering the tractability of permits and tags. Today [the current trial] the Victorian government provides tags free to the farmers and is also responsible for the administration of the trial. VPP is required to report tags collected and kangaroo numbers to both DEWLP and PrimeSafe. The Victorian Government during this trial will incur extra administration cost.

43 Processors would support the extraction of sambar and red deer from crown land with the aid of field chillers. These chillers will need power and may need to be located on private land. A robust system of control will need to be implemented. Portable chillers can vary in size and type. Shipping containers are usually 20 and 40 foot long and the power source is 3 phase. Vehicle mounted chillers could be used but are expensive.

44 VPP could process deer on all our licenced plants once delivered.

45 The skinning and processing of deer would be similar to that of processing yearling cattle so if yields were similar it may well. We would need to do some tests on meat yield and skin values to determine commercial profitability. Being able to process deer from crown land may prove difficult due to the unknown number of persons that may be camping and or bush walking with in these areas. There is potential risk to these people. Should the government implement such a program of deer control we would look at the possibilities of harvesting them similar to that of the kangaroo trial. Chiller location placements would be critical to the operation and access to these chillers by shooters would be needed. Special legislation may be needed to enable any shooting on crown land.

46 Should permits be given to recreational shooters overall control would be difficult to manage due to the fact that most shooting may well happen during weekends. Many of these persons may have little if any experience in the humane destruction of wildlife. The deer harvested by recreational shooters may not be close to chillers, causing other issues. Ideally a similar system to that of the current kangaroo trial would work best, that is preferred shooters that are trained to carry out the correct processes. Ensuring the deer are humanely shot, dressed and placed to chillers in a timely way. Time and temperature is critical for quality product.

47 There may be some commercial benefit should deer be harvested for human consumption as the price per kilogram general is greater for a human consumption product than pet food. Field dressed animals [Game Meat] is controlled by PrimeSafe and any deer processed for human consumption would need to meet the standards applicable. The standards for Game Meat are in place to ensure public health. All processing establishments would need to meet the construction standard. That is similar to local slaughter houses and abattoirs. In some case individual buildings may find it difficult to pass these standard. Should someone invest in a new processing establishment standards can be achieved easily, although costly. In the kangaroo industry [QLD, SA, NSW.] There are processors that produce human consumption kangaroo products. These same processors down grade much of their product to the pet food industry because of the lack of export markets and local consumption.

48 Yes. Some of our products are a blend of meat species. Much of our pet meat products are single species products. Kangaroo is sold as kangaroo in a number of pack sizes, be it minced, whole or chopped or blended if required.

49 Consultation with government departments regarding the implementation of such programs will ensure that any trial, be it deer or kangaroo has a chance to succeed. Having a clear understanding of just what is to be achieved through such a trial. A commitment from

the government that a trial must be carried out commercially and be profitable for those persons currently operating within the current and future trials. Clear policies need to be in place for all those involved in the shooting / processing of both deer and kangaroo. The use of field chillers and location of these chillers will be critical for any harvesting of deer and kangaroo in national parks. Farmers have a need to control both deer and kangaroo to ensure good farming practices and profits. The issuing of permits to farmers needs to be looked at. Maybe too much control of permit numbers is in the hands of a few wildlife offices that have little understanding of farmer's needs. Control within national parks is all about reducing the breeding of these animals. Both kangaroos and deer will feed on private property that adjoins the national parks. Both State and federal Governments need to have all aspects of the trial finalised prior to announcing any trials. Simple thing like the sale of kangaroo skins had not been thought of in the first trial and today the sale of skins recovered from the recently opened shires cannot be sold. Much of our concerns are with the DELWP. PrimeSafe has in place a good system the controls pet food processing.

50 A good shooter that devoted five to six days shooting could earn \$90,000 per year. There is a need for processors and shooters to have access to farmer's details and permits in order to stream line the collection and processing of animals. This currently is not possible.

51-53 Strict guidelines and regulation governing the shooters is the only way to control shooters as very few authorities are going to work the hours required to police the areas being harvested. Nor do the processors have the resources to monitor the shooters. Our company continually expressed the need that the shooters only shot farms as described on the permits. Areas such as Timboon and Simson have a number of deer and we are often asked if we could provide someone to harvest these. Sometimes one of our employees may provide that service for the farmer. Kangaroo population are now located just north of our processing plant. Three years ago the area was free from kangaroos.

54 In some cases our shooters may use a suppressor/ silencer. These are used in areas that may be close to townships or houses.

End