



The Hon Mark Furner MP  
Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries

Our ref: CTS 24293/19  
Your ref: A 485250

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09 OCT 2019

Mr Neil Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament  
Queensland Parliamentary Service  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 4 September 2019 concerning Petition No. 3163-19, received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly, relating to the management of Red Imported Fire Ants in the northern regions of the Gold Coast.

The Palaszczuk Government is aware of the potential negative impacts fire ants could have on Queensland's economy, environment, public health and lifestyle and is committed to eradicating this pest. It is for this reason that the Queensland Government, in partnership with the Federal and all State and Territory Governments, has committed to a 10-year plan to eradicate fire ants in South-East Queensland by 2026–27.

The eradication strategy over the 10 years has been designed to reduce the size of the infestation, using a staged, rolling planned treatment program, starting from the west and progressively moving to the east, using the Pacific Ocean as a natural boundary to the east. This approach was taken in order to prevent fire ants becoming established in the prime agricultural areas west of Brisbane, which are considered to be ideal habitat for the species. If this had occurred, it is likely that there would have been significant financial impacts upon the agricultural sector in this region.

The 10-year fire ant eradication is being delivered by Biosecurity Queensland through the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program. Eradication treatments for 2019–20 have already commenced. Significant changes to the 2019–20 eradication works, would not be logistically practical and could undermine eradication outcomes. The program of work for this financial year does include suppression of fire ants in some areas of the Gold Coast.

As the Program progresses, the eradication strategy is reviewed to account for changes in the nature and behaviour of the fire ant infestation, and to address any new risks that may arise. These reviews are scheduled for later this year.

I would like to stress that all Queenslanders have a general biosecurity obligation to help stop the spread of fire ants. The Fire Ant Eradication Program continues to invest in community education to help inform people of what can be done at an individual level to help stop the spread. This includes options for self-management of fire ants through the use of pest management technicians.

If you require further information, I encourage you to contact my office on 07 3719 7420.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "M. Furner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

**MARK FURNER MP**

**Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries**