



\$18.5 MILLION WAR ON LOCUSTS

Wednesday 21 July 2010

Premier Kristina Keneally today announced an **\$18.5 million** package to help farmers across the State protect their valuable crops and pastures from a spring locust plague – the worst in 30 years.

Past campaigns have shown that for every \$1,000 spent controlling locusts, at least \$20,000 worth of crops and pastures have been saved.

It is estimated that this funding could help farmers save up to \$370 million worth of crops and pastures.

The ***NSW Plague Locust Emergency Preparedness Response Plan*** includes:

- Enough insecticide on hand and on order to treat more than half a million hectares of locusts – five times the amount used in the 2008-2009 campaign;
- About 40 aircraft on stand-by for spring and summer;
- More than 100 field staff ready to be called up for the campaign;
- Experts mapping locust and egg beds locations;
- Planning team working on the operational plan;
- Preparing to distribute insecticide to landholders; and
- High-level Plague Locust Management Group meetings comprising government and industry representatives including the NSW Farmers' Association.

Ms Keneally made the formal announcement at the annual meeting of the NSW Farmers Association.

“Our farmers have fought through a long drought and a winter deluge – and we are now stepping in to help them protect their crops,” Ms Keneally said.

“A combination of warm, wet weather earlier this year has resulted in extensive egg laying – which means NSW is preparing for what could be the worst Australian plague locust outbreak in more than 30 years.”

The funding package will support the ***NSW Plague Locust Emergency Preparedness Response Plan*** – using insecticide, surveillance, planning, communications, resourcing and logistics operations to fight locusts.

This is in addition to the extensive effort of Industry & Investment NSW and local Livestock Health and Pest Authorities (LHPA) across the State.

A workforce is on-standby and aircraft for surveillance purposes have been engaged to monitor the threat.

Minister for Primary Industries Steve Whan said NSW Government has been working with NSW Farmers Association and the LHPAs for months to ensure a co-ordinated and strategic battle plan is drawn up and ready for activation before the first locusts begin to hatch in late August.

“I have asked the NSW Plague Locust Commissioner to have the Plague Locust State Control Headquarters set-up at Industry & Investment NSW Headquarters in Orange within the next two weeks,” Mr Whan said.

“A number of regional control operations centres will be established in locust hot spots, especially in central and southern NSW as the need is identified.

“But conquering locusts is a team effort – that means farmers and land managers are on the frontline for the NSW locust campaign.

“It is important that farmers be vigilant reporting locusts, obtaining insecticide from their LHPA and treating banding locusts on their properties.”

Background Facts:

- The first locusts are expected to hatch in late August in the State’s north and far west.
- Large numbers of locusts are anticipated in many parts of the north-west, central west, far west and Riverina, where good rains fell.
- Significant numbers are forecast for central and southern NSW around Nyngan, Condobolin, Tullamore, Ivanhoe, West Wyalong, Ungarie, Coolamon, Griffith, Hay and Balranald.
- The most intense activity is forecast for the central and Riverina in September and October, depending on conditions such as temperature and moisture levels.
- Swarms of adult locusts are highly mobile and almost impossible to treat.
- It is critical to control locusts before they damage crops and pastures – while they are grounded and unable to fly. This means treating them at the nymphal banding stage with insecticide before they take to the wing.
- A swarm covering one kilometre could eat up to 10 tonnes of vegetation per day.
- Banding locusts can potentially move through crops and pastures leaving nothing behind.
- Treatment not only kills locusts, but also prevents new generations.
- In the 2004/2005 campaign more than \$1 billion worth of crops and pastures was saved as a result of a partnership between farmers and the NSW Government.
- LHPA ratepayers can obtain free insecticide to treat banding locusts from their local Livestock Health and Pest Authority.
- Biological control agents are also available for use in certain areas such as organic farms and sensitive sites.