



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

Our ref: CTS 30954/17

1 William Street Brisbane 4000
GPO Box 46 Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3719 7420
Email agriculture@ministerial.qld.gov.au

22 JAN 2018

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

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 27 October 2017 enclosing a copy of Petition No. 2763-17 lodged in the Queensland Legislative Assembly, regarding legalising the keeping of ferrets as pets in Queensland.

In accordance with section 59A of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* and Standing Order 31, I request that this final response be tabled during the period that the Legislative Assembly is dissolved.

Ferrets (*Mustela putorius furo*) are classified as prohibited matter under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* (the Act). This means that it is an offence under the Act to have any dealings with ferrets, including keeping them as pets, in Queensland.

In other countries, numerous species that are derived from the pet trade have become serious pests. Examples include various lizards, snakes, frogs, salamanders, toads, turtles, chipmunks, hedgehogs and caimans, as well as ferrets. For this reason, importing some animals and keeping them as pets is prohibited by legislation.

Scientific risk assessments are used worldwide as a method of predicting an exotic animal's invasiveness potential. A risk assessment completed by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, through Biosecurity Queensland, found that ferrets could establish wild populations in Queensland and are an extreme threat species. There is also a national agreement that rates ferrets as being highly likely to establish wild populations in Australia and become a pest of agriculture, the environment and public amenity.

Ferrets have formed wild populations in New Zealand, Europe, North America, Japan, Russia and the Canary Islands. Wild populations of ferrets have also been reported from time to time in the Blue Mountains and Tasmania. Anecdotal evidence suggests a population may have existed near Inglewood, Queensland, however this has not been confirmed.

If wild populations of ferrets were to establish in their full potential range within Queensland, the primary impact is likely to be as a new predator of small to mid-sized native animals, such as possums, bandicoots, birds (and eggs), lizards, frogs, fish and invertebrates. This has occurred in New Zealand where ground-dwelling and ground-nesting birds are particularly at risk. Domestic species such as poultry may also be at risk, especially given the ferret's tendency to kill more than required for food when presented with large numbers of prey.

In addition to pest potential, there are animal management and animal welfare considerations with pet ferrets. Unwanted domestic pets have a significant impost on society and it is well recognised that trends in pet ownership often result in increased surrenders to pounds and rescue organisations. Ferrets are no different to other pets in this regard and there are at least ten ferret rescue societies in Australia.

It is often suggested that ferrets should be allowed as pets if they have been registered. However, there are practical obstacles to introducing registration of privately owned animals as it is often difficult to enforce and costly to implement.

Local governments administer animal management legislation for other pet species, such as cats and dogs, in their areas and it is likely that for consistency, the potential registration of ferrets would also fall on local governments. Although there has not been any consultation, local governments are likely to resist any increased regulatory burden imposed on them by the Queensland Government.

If you require any further information regarding this matter, please contact Mr Greg McDougall, Senior Biosecurity Officer, Biosecurity Queensland on telephone 0407 742 392 or email greg.mcdougall@daf.qld.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



MARK FURNER MP

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