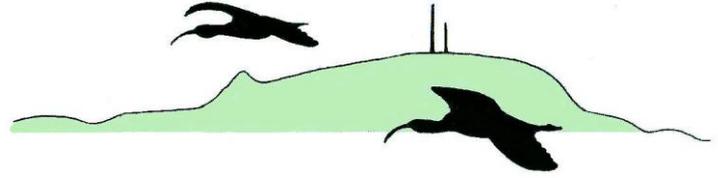


**ORANGE FIELD NATURALIST &
CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.
PO BOX 369
ORANGE, NSW 2800**



Mr. Tom Grosskopf
Director Landscapes and Ecosystems Conservation
Environment & Heritage Policy and Programs
Office of Environment and Heritage
POBox A290 Sydney South
NSW 1232

Dear Mr Grosskopf

GREY HEADED FLYING FOXES

Thank you for your letter reference MD11/756 dated 23rd August 2011 that relates to the issue of mitigation of damage caused by grey-headed flying foxes.

While we are pleased that a netting subsidy program is being established for the Sydney Basin and Central Coast we are concerned that no similar action is contemplated for inland NSW.

We do not have to remind you that in excess of 5000 of these animals caused problems to orchardists in 2010 in Orange and Bathurst and that several thousand were also causing problems to fruit growers in early 2011.

Since licences to cull these animals were issued “in special circumstances” in these years and will continue to be so issued, it appears that nothing has changed with regard to this region.

You may be aware that Orange City Council commissioned a special report on control measures for these animals in 2010 from Professor David Goldney. He made it clear in that report that shooting was not a solution, and that netting provided the only adequate method of crop protection.

Your letter refers to the chance for “commercial growers who had previously relied on licensed shooting to restructure their operations”. It would seem that licensed shooting does not provide more than a very minor defence against crop damage, and the issue of fewer licences will merely encourage orchardists to shoot illegally

There is considerable anecdotal evidence that far more flying foxes were in fact shot in the Orange region than licences permitted. This has conservation and animal cruelty implications which cannot be ignored.

We believe you when you state that the policy your letter outlines will promote better conservation outcomes for these animals in some areas, but not in the Orange and Bathurst regions, which are our main concerns.

Since they have visited these regions for two consecutive years in considerable numbers we consider it likely that the flying foxes will return again, if not this year then certainly in the future. When that happens it will be too late to rewrite the policy. We request that you reconsider urgently the allocation of funds for netting to include the Central West of NSW.

We know that orchardists would far prefer to net their crops than to shoot flying foxes and thus the netting option would satisfy all the objectives you mention – benefits for fruit growers, better conservation outcomes for the flying foxes, and a reduction in the potential for cruelty to animals

Yours sincerely

A.N.G.SMITH

Hon Secretary
Orange Field Naturalist & Conservation Society