



Australian Government
**Rural Industries Research and
Development Corporation**

California, New York, the World and Kangaroos

RIRDC Publication No. 10/220



Australian
Kangaroo Leather

RIRDC Innovation for rural Australia



Australian Government

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California, New York, the World and Kangaroos

by John Kelly

February 2011

RIRDC Publication No. 10/220
RIRDC Project No. PRJ-003120

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ISBN 978-1-74254-185-3
ISSN 1440-6845

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Researcher Contact Details

John Kelly
PO Box 294
Mowbray TAS 7248

Phone: 03 6326 8639
Fax: 03 6326 2790
Email: lenah@bigpond.net.au

In submitting this report, the researcher has agreed to RIRDC publishing this material in its edited form.

RIRDC Contact Details

Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation
Level 2, 15 National Circuit
BARTON ACT 2600

PO Box 4776
KINGSTON ACT 2604

Phone: 02 6271 4100
Fax: 02 6271 4199
Email: rirdc@rirdc.gov.au
Web: <http://www.rirdc.gov.au>

Electronically published by RIRDC in February 2011
Print-on-demand by Union Offset Printing, Canberra at www.rirdc.gov.au
or phone 1300 634 313

Foreword

This research project was established provide background information in support of efforts to modify legislation in New York and California which impeded the sale of kangaroo products in those States. Doing so was seen by the kangaroo industry as being of much greater importance than simply the direct sales to those two destinations. Having unimpeded market access to both states carried global significance in kangaroo product sales, especially leather.

Modification of the legislation is expected to deliver benefits to the entire kangaroo industry, helping to keep open these markets and allow for the expansion of markets for skins, and for leather, and eventual high value manufactured product.

This project was funded from industry revenue, which is matched by funds provided by the Australian Government.

This report is an addition to RIRDC's diverse range of over 2000 research publications and it forms part of our kangaroo industry R&D program, which aims to grow markets for the kangaroo industry.

Most of RIRDC's publications are available for viewing, free downloading or purchasing online at www.rirdc.gov.au. Purchases can also be made by phoning 1300 634 313.

Craig Burns
Managing Director
Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation

Abbreviations

DFAT: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

KIAA: Kangaroo Industries Association of Australia

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Executive Summary

What the report is about

This report describes a project aimed at securing unrestricted market access for kangaroo industry products into New York and California.

Who is the report targeted at?

The project provided background research and information to assist passage of legislation in both destinations.

Where are the relevant industries located in Australia?

The kangaroo industry harvests kangaroos throughout the rangelands of Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia. Typical annual takes are approx 3 million kangaroos. These are processed in over 40 dedicated meat and skin processing establishments across the country, with the bulk located in Queensland. The industry generates up to 4000 full time positions in harvesting and processing operations delivering approx \$250M/year in gross income. Meat and leather products are exported to over 60 countries world wide as well as widely used domestically.

In addition, the industry provides an essential environmental management service. Kangaroos typically represent about 30% of total grazing pressure in the rangelands. Total grazing pressure is a key environmental indicator in these regions, and must be carefully managed to minimise risk of desertification and biodiversity loss. The kangaroo harvest is the only tool available to manage the kangaroo component of total grazing pressure.

Further, the kangaroo harvest delivers a vital damage mitigation service for farmers. Kangaroos compete directly with sheep for the grazing resources, especially during droughts. They also directly consume crops and greatly diminish grazier's capacity to lock country up for spelling from grazing pressure.

Thus, projects such as this which benefits the kangaroo industry, also deliver flow on benefits to a wide range of other sectors producing significant public good.

Background

Prior to the project, both California and New York had legislation preventing the sale of kangaroo products. Both markets are critical to ongoing kangaroo industry development, both in terms of the level of actual trade with them, but more so, in their global significance.

New York for example remains one of the worlds fashion capitals. Several major labels had indicated to the kangaroo industry that if they could not exhibit kangaroo leather lines in New York, then they would not use the product period. California is the world's largest single market for soccer boots. Again, major producers had indicated that if they cannot sell kangaroo leather soccer boots in California, then they may not produce them at all.

Methods used

The project directly managed the research and implementation of a planned process to inform Californian and New York legislators of the regulation and sustainability of the kangaroo industry. This was directed at ensuring passage of Bills to legalise this trade.

Results/key findings

Unrestricted legislative change was achieved in New York to allow the sale of all legally produced kangaroo product. In California similar change was achieved, however the Bill passed carries a five year sunset clause, after which legislation will revert to that preventing sale of kangaroo products. Therefore a similar effort will be required to have a new Bill passed during 2015. At this point it is likely a Bill without a sunset clause may be accepted.

Implications for relevant stakeholders for:

This outcome now gives users of kangaroo products, particularly leather, confidence that they can sell it anywhere in the world without legal restrictions. This will deliver ongoing benefits in kangaroo market expansion, to assist further development of an industry which provides a little over 4000 jobs nationally. Many of these positions are in remote and regional areas distributed across the commercial kangaroo harvest zones in Western Qld, Western NSW, SA and WA.

The project demonstrated the difficulty in ‘selling’ the kangaroo industry. The desired legislative change was only achieved at considerable effort and against vehement opposition from radical animal liberationists. This report discusses the background to this opposition and suggests ways to help overcome it in order to further benefit kangaroo industry development.

Recommendations

The report details several recommendations directed at the kangaroo industry and Australian governments. These cover the need for further legislative lobby in California and means of improving the image of the kangaroo industry.

1. Introduction

During the early 1970's environmental activists in the United States of America convinced regulators that kangaroos were threatened with extinction. In 1974, the federal Fish and Wildlife agency listed the three commercially harvested kangaroo species as threatened, imposing a ban on imports of kangaroo products. The States of New York and California enacted similar legislative bans at about the same time.

The Australian government managed eventually to convince the US department the species of kangaroo commercially harvested were in fact abundant, and Australia had in place sound management practices to ensure the harvest was sustainable. However it took years of effort to lift the federal ban, eventually in 1995.

However, the two pieces of State legislation remained in place. They were largely ignored for over two decades until trade in kangaroo products to these states became too important to be threatened by their presence. Indeed in the Californian case, animal liberationist groups started taking civil action under the legislation to try to stop the sale of kangaroo products. It also became apparent that even in the absence of such actions, the legislation was an impediment to trade development.

During 2007, after a five year campaign, a coalition of the Australian Government, Kangaroo Industries Association of Australia (KIAA) and Adidas achieved an amendment to Californian law, overturning the prohibition on the sale of kangaroo products. However, as is common practice in 'controversial' Californian Bills, this could only be enacted with a three year 'sunset' clause, which expired on 31 Dec 2010.

California is the largest market in the US for high quality sporting shoes, especially soccer boots. Many of these are made with kangaroo leather. The US is the largest market in the world for such sporting goods. Hence it is essential for ongoing kangaroo industry development that there is uninhibited access to this market.

In 2008, four restaurants in New York were charged for breach of the New York Environment and Conservation Law 11-0536 banning sales of kangaroo products. Exactly what triggered action under a piece of legislation which had been ignored for decades is not known. It quickly became obvious that many major fashion industry buyers were now uncomfortable. New York is one of the major fashion centres of the world. If a global business could not exhibit and sell any product using kangaroo leather in New York, then they were unlikely to use the leather at all.

Thus both the Californian and New York markets had far greater importance to the kangaroo industry than just the level of trade to each.

This projects aim was to research mechanisms and provide documentation to support efforts aimed at changing the prohibitive legislation regarding sale of kangaroo products in both New York and California.

2. Objectives

The project aimed to assist the ongoing development of the kangaroo industry by contributing to the industry's strategic goal of "facilitating market access to targeted destinations" (RIRDC 2005). California and New York both have importance to the kangaroo industry way beyond the level of trade to these actual destinations. Securing unrestricted access to these markets is essential to maintaining and expanding trade in kangaroo products globally, in particular leather.

3. Methodology

The project co-ordinated Californian and New York based legislative consultants, as well as Australian government representatives. Research identified potential means of introducing Bills in each State, appropriate sponsors and structures.

Once the Bill structures and sponsors were identified, they then had to be guided through the appropriate committees. At this stage it became necessary to defend the operations of the kangaroo industry against a wide range of allegations posed by animal liberation activists obviously not wishing to see the Bills passed. Extensive supportive documentation on the industry was supplied by the project, this included:

- lists of published papers in support of the kangaroo harvest
- details of the low carbon footprint of kangaroo
- co-ordination of written support for the kangaroo harvest from appropriate Federal Ministers.
- details of Australian legislation which aims to maximise the sustainability and animal welfare outcomes of the kangaroo harvest
- operational background on the harvest and legislative controls

Interestingly, issues of sustainability seemed of greater concern to the Legislators than animal welfare. The animal liberation opposition to the Bills certainly raised objections to the industry on sustainability issues, but their most emotive attacks were on animal welfare issues. Why these seemed to get less traction with the Legislators is not clear.

4. Results

The project successfully achieved legislative change in both New York and California. This however came only with considerable justification of the credibility of the kangaroo harvest on both environmental and animal welfare grounds. In both states the changes faced vehement opposition from local animal welfare organisations. Considerable effort had to be made to convince Legislators that most claims by the animal liberationists were either totally false or grossly misleading.

The willingness of Legislators in both States to pass the Bills knowing that it may well cost them some votes from local opponents in the animal liberation camp, speaks well of their commitment to responsible government, and they are to be congratulated.

In New York Chapter 338 of the Laws of 2009 was signed by the State Governor on 11th Aug 2009. This clarified the previous legislation which placed a blanket ban on trade in all kangaroo species. Trade of Tasmanian Forester Kangaroos only is restricted, and thereby specifically allowing trade in the commercially harvested species.

In California on 13th Aug 2010, SB 1345 (Calderon) was passed by the Assembly. The final recorded floor vote was 53 Ayes, 16 Noes and 10 not voting. This was considered a big win by the consultants involved. The Bill was signed into Law by the State Governor on September 29, 2010.

The two pieces of new legislation are given in attachment one.

5. Implications

The project assisted change in legislation in both California and New York, enabling the sale of kangaroo products. The Californian legislation, as is standard practice for that State, carries a 'sunset' clause. However at this time the sunset clause was extended to five years. In consultation with DFAT and the Australian Counsel General in Los Angeles, it is recommended that further work be initiated at the end of 2014, after planned State elections, to seek to have a further Bill passed. At this attempt, a bill which carries no sunset clause may be accepted. To do so, a similar level of activity is likely to be needed, meaning once again attempting to convince an unformed audience that it is possible, and in fact necessary, to protect the environment by killing native wildlife.

This exercise has demonstrated the difficulty of defending the kangaroo industry. The task was to convince State governments, in Australia's closest ally, that we, as a sovereign and responsible western power, are quite capable of sustainably and scientifically managing our own native and iconic wildlife species. That Australian legislation will adequately protect Australian wildlife and does not need to be overridden by foreign legislation. That American Federal legislation on the legality of kangaroo imports (which allows it) also does not need to be overridden by State legislation. On the face of it this would seem an easy task!

However it certainly was not. Considerable work was required to get the Bills passed, particularly at the committee stage. Selling the kangaroo industry is a challenge, even under extremely favourable circumstances. It's a challenge which the industry needs to be continually addressing and reviewing. The industry can readily promote its environmental credentials, and rarely faces vehement opposition from environmental NGO's. Certainly this was the case in New York and California. The opposition to the Bills in these States came from animal liberation NGO's who also tried to attack the industry on environmental grounds. This is a common practice, and reflects current experience in Australia. Animal liberation groups are principally concerned with convincing the rest of the world to become vegetarian. Their attacks on the kangaroo industry concerning sustainability could be viewed as being more driven by a desire to see kangaroos (and all animals) not killed and eaten, than by a concern for the species survival.

This mixing and confusing of environmental and animal welfare 'feel good' motivations and messages confuses the arguments over the kangaroo industry. All the available science suggests there is no concern over the sustainability of the current kangaroo harvest, and indeed that the industry offers significant environmental benefits. However, whilst opposition on animal welfare grounds continues, this evidence will be ignored or misrepresented by animal liberationists to denigrate the industry.

6. Recommendations

Of broad industry relevance:

The difficulties of separating environment from animal welfare, the interlinking of them as both feel good motivations, caused significant delay and additional expense in implementing this project. It also cost the kangaroo industry significant time in defending its operations, and significant lost marketing opportunity. The project recommends that a study be initiated looking into the question of animal welfare in the kangaroo industry. Many commentators have suggested that the kangaroo industry has significant animal welfare benefits compared to other forms of meat production. The RSPCA for example has commented:

“If achieved correctly, kangaroo culling is considered one of the most humane forms of animal slaughter. An animal killed instantly within its own environment is under less stress than domestic stock that have been herded, penned, transported etc.” (RSPCA 1985)

Studies have suggested juvenile mortality rates in harvested kangaroo populations are actually less than those in un-harvested populations. The first casualties of declines in feed supply during droughts are the juveniles. Therefore, controlling adult numbers and dampening ‘boom and bust’ population cycles probably enables more juveniles to survive in the long run than are killed by the industry (Pople 1996).

It may well also be that kangaroo meat is a more humane source of protein than wheat or other cereals. Growing cereal crops in Australia necessitates protecting them against mice plagues on a regular basis. The numbers of mice killed by poisoning in such circumstances are immense, and a direct result of cereal production. It may be argued that the cost in sentient life per kilogram of protein produced from kangaroo harvesting is even less than that from growing wheat. Further the poisons used to kill mice in such plagues, principally zinc phosphide and anticoagulants, deliverer amongst the least acceptable modes of death, in animal welfare terms, of 60 control methods used on various feral animals as assessed by Sharp and Saunders (2010).

These factors could be examined in a desk audit of the hypotheses: “Is kangaroo meat the most animal welfare friendly protein available to Australians?”

Of more direct relevance to the project outcomes:

The Californian legislation requires the Californian Department of Fish and Game to receive an annual report from Australia in writing by approximately May 1 detailing the official quota for the current year, and confirming that the quota has been established consistent with Australian national and state law. Both DFAT and the KIAA will need to monitor this each year to ensure such reports are submitted.

The Californian Bill will expire on 1 Jan 2016. It is recommended that new activity be initiated in late 2014 to attempt to have a new Bill passed. At this attempt it should be possible to secure a Bill which does not carry a sunset clause.

Appendices

New York Legislation



Tuesday, November 23, 2010

- This bill is not active in the current session.

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Bill No.: A08559

[Summary](#) [Actions](#) [Votes](#) [Memo](#)
 [Text](#)

A08559 Summary:

BILL NO A08559A

SAME AS Same as S 5766

SPONSOR Sweeney

COSPNSR

MLTSPNSR

Amd S11-0536, En Con L

Relates to the prohibition of the sale of Tasmanian Forester Kangaroo.

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A08559 Actions:

BILL NO A08559A

05/28/2009 referred to environmental conservation
 06/02/2009 reported referred to codes
 06/02/2009 amend and recommit to codes
 06/02/2009 print number 8559a
 06/08/2009 reported referred to rules
 06/16/2009 reported
 06/16/2009 rules report cal.356
 06/16/2009 ordered to third reading rules cal.356
 06/16/2009 passed assembly
 06/16/2009 delivered to senate
 06/18/2009 REFERRED TO RULES
 07/16/2009 SUBSTITUTED FOR S5766
 07/16/2009 3RD READING CAL.868
 07/16/2009 PASSED SENATE
 07/16/2009 RETURNED TO ASSEMBLY
 07/31/2009 delivered to governor
 08/11/2009 signed chap.338

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A08559 Text:

S T A T E O F N E W Y O R K

8559--A

2009-2010 Regular Sessions

I N A S S E M B L Y

May 28, 2009

Introduced by M. of A. SWEENEY -- read once and referred to the Committee on Environmental Conservation -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

AN ACT to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to the sale of certain wild animals

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, REPRESENTED IN SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

1 Section 1. Subdivision 1 of section 11-0536 of the environmental
2 conservation law, as amended by chapter 911 of the laws of 1990, is
3 amended to read as follows:

4 1. Except as provided in subdivision three hereof, no part of the skin
5 or body, whether raw or manufactured, of the following species of wild
6 animals or the animal itself may be sold or offered for sale by any
7 individual, firm, corporation, association or partnership within the
8 state of New York :--Leopard (*Panthera pardus*), Snow Leopard (*Uncia*),
9 Clouded Leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*), Tiger (*Panthera tigris*), Asiatic
10 Lion (*Panthera leo persica*), Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*), Alligators,
11 Caiman or Crocodile of the Order Crocodylia (except as provided in
12 subdivision two of this section), tortoises of the genus *Gopherus*,
13 marine turtles of the family Cheloniidae and the family Dermochelidae,
14 Vicuna (*Vicugna vicugna*), Wolf (*Canis lupus*), Red Wolf (*Canis niger*), or
15 TASMANIAN FORESTER Kangaroo [*Macropodidae*] (*MACROPUS GIGANTEUS TASMAN-*
16 *IENSIS*) or Polar Bear (*Thalarctos maritimus*), Mountain Lion, sometimes
17 called Cougar (*Felis concolor*), Jaguar (*Panthera onca*), Ocelot (*Felis*
18 *pardalis*), or Margay (*Felis wiedii*), Sumatran Rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus*
19 *sumatrensis*), or Black Rhinoceros (*Dicero bicornis*).

20 S 2. The commissioner of environmental conservation may modify the
21 prohibition contained in this act to apply to additional species of
22 macropodidae upon a determination by the country of origin that such
23 species is endangered.

24 S 3. This act shall take effect on the ninetieth day after it shall
25 have become a law.

EXPLANATION--Matter in ITALICS (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[] is old law to be omitted.

LBD14038-02-9

Californian Legislation

SB 1345 (Calderon) - Approved by Senate Natural Resources Committee on 8-0 vote subject to amendments similar to the following:

1. Extend Penal Code Section 653o sunset date by 5 years to 2016;
2. Specify that the Director of the Department of Fish and Game receive the annual report from Australia provided for in Section 653o(c) (1), that the report be in writing and that the report be submitted by approximately May 1 of each year; and
3. Specify that the annual quota shall change annually to be consistent with the cull quota set annually by Australia rather than be tied to the current 2007 benchmark.

653o. (a) It is unlawful to import into this state for commercial purposes, to possess with intent to sell, or to sell within the state, the dead body, or any part or product thereof, of any polar bear, leopard, ocelot, tiger, cheetah, jaguar, sable antelope, wolf (*Canis lupus*), zebra, whale, cobra, python, sea turtle, colobus monkey, kangaroo, vicuna, sea otter, free-roaming feral horse, dolphin or porpoise (*Delphinidae*), Spanish lynx, or elephant.

(b) (1) Commencing January 1, 2015, it shall be unlawful to import into this state for commercial purposes, to possess with intent to sell, or to sell within the state, the dead body, or any part or product thereof, of any crocodile or alligator.

(2) This subdivision shall not be construed to authorize the importation or sale of any alligator or crocodilian species, or any products thereof, that are listed as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act, or to allow the importation or sale of any alligator or crocodilian species, or any products thereof, in violation of any federal law or any international treaty to which the United States is a party.

(c) (1) This section shall not apply to kangaroos that may be harvested lawfully under Australian national and state law, the federal Endangered Species Act of 1971 (16 U.S.C. Sec. 1531 et seq.), and applicable international conventions, provided that by approximately May 1 the Director of the Department of Fish and Game is annually informed in writing by the Australian government what the official quota for the current year is and that the quota has been established consistent with Australian national and state law.

(2) If the department fails to receive the report described in paragraph (1), the department shall inform the Australian national government that future importation of kangaroos that otherwise may be harvested lawfully under Australian national and state law, the federal Endangered Species Act of 1971 (16 U.S.C. Sec. 1531 et seq.), and applicable international conventions shall be halted and their importation into this state for commercial purposes, possession with intent to sell, or sale within the state will be subject to the provisions of this section.

(d) Any person who violates any provision of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be subject to a fine of not less than one thousand dollars (\$1,000) and not to exceed five thousand dollars (\$5,000) or imprisonment in the county jail not to exceed six months, or both fine and imprisonment, for each violation.

(e) The prohibitions against importation for commercial purposes, possession with intent to sell, and sale of the species listed in this section are severable. A finding of the invalidity of any one or more prohibitions shall not affect the validity of any remaining prohibitions.

(f) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2016, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2016, deletes or extends that date.

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Contact RIRDC:

Level 2
15 National Circuit
Barton ACT 2600

PO Box 4776
Kingston ACT 2604

Ph: 02 6271 4100

Fax: 02 6271 4199

Email: rirdc@rirdc.gov.au

web: www.rirdc.gov.au

Bookshop: 1300 634 313



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