

C. Audit scope and methods

Performance engagement

This audit has been performed in accordance with the *Auditor-General Auditing Standards*, incorporating, where relevant, the standards on assurance engagements issued by the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board. This includes the Standard on Assurance Engagements ASAE 3500 *Performance Engagements*. This standard establishes mandatory requirements, and provides explanatory guidance, for undertaking and reporting on performance engagements.

Audit objective and scope

The objective of the audit is to assess how effectively state and local government entities are managing invasive species.

The audit addressed the objective through the following sub-objectives and criteria:

Sub-objective 1: The responsible entities act effectively to prevent, eradicate, contain, and manage invasive species	
Criteria 1.1	Entities identify and assess invasive species risk
Criteria 1.2	Entities plan effectively to manage invasive species
Criteria 1.3	Entities take action to manage invasive species
Sub-objective 2: The responsible entities effectively monitor and report on invasive species to demonstrate achievement of outcomes	
Criteria 2.1	Entities monitor and report on the effectiveness of their biosecurity activities both individually and at a whole-of-government level

The entities we audited

- Department of Agriculture and Fisheries – responsible for leading the biosecurity system and mitigating the risk of invasive plants and animals across the state
- Department of Environment and Science – responsible for managing invasive species in parks and forests across the state and protecting species that are at risk of extinction
- local councils – responsible for having a biosecurity plan and managing invasive species in their local government area.

Scope exclusions

We included all invasive plants and animals in Queensland in the scope of this audit, including red imported fire ants. Biosecurity Queensland is leading the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program (the program). The program is overseen by a National Steering Committee. We did not audit the committee or any other commonwealth agency in relation to the program.

We did not examine how entities manage biosecurity incidents for major disease outbreaks, such as foot and mouth disease.



Method

Field interviews and site visits

We conducted interviews with key people, staff, and stakeholders from across the biosecurity system, including regional areas of Queensland. This included but was not limited to:

- Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
- Department of Environment and Science
- National Red Imported Fire Ant Program and the National Steering Committee
- local councils
- regional organisations of councils
- Local Government Association of Queensland
- AgForce
- Invasive Species Council
- National Feral Pig Action Plan.

The Auditor-General and the audit team conducted a site visit of the National Fire Ant Eradication Program at Berrinba.

Survey

We distributed a survey to all 77 local councils in Queensland. The survey included questions about local councils' biosecurity plans and approaches to managing invasive species. Sixty-one local councils responded.

Document review

We obtained and reviewed relevant documents from the entities involved in the audit. This included legislation, strategic plans, operational plans, guidelines, correspondence, performance reports, reviews, evaluations, and modelling. We also considered research from other jurisdictions and academia.

Data analysis

We analysed data from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries:

- Biosecurity orders (2017–2021)
- Fire ant detections (2001–2022)
- Queensland Feral Pest Initiative grant funding (2016–2021).

We validated our data methods and analysis progressively with the relevant entities.

Subject matter experts

We interviewed subject matter experts. This included entomologists – to understand the biology of fire ants and their impact and spread. We also discussed approaches to containing and eradicating fire ants in Australia and other countries, like the United States.

