

Is kangaroo management justified and humane? What are the concerns and how can they be addressed?

*Steve McLeod, Research Scientist, Vertebrate Pest Research Unit, Industry & Investment NSW,
steven.mcleod@dpi.nsw.gov.au*

The management of kangaroos is a highly controversial issue that receives considerable interest at both national and international levels. The lethal methods of control in particular are often under scrutiny with critics arguing that some methods are inhumane, that killing large numbers of kangaroos is putting some species at risk of extinction or even that eating kangaroo meat is a danger to human health. But are these criticisms based on fact or opinion?

There are widely disparate views on how humans should use and treat animals. Whenever we decide to manage animals, including doing nothing, we have an impact on them and our decisions about what constitutes a justifiable imposition on animals depends on our value system. Because of differences in values held by individuals, there are differing levels of acceptance of kangaroo management.

The role of science is to provide information on the effects of management not only on the animals being managed but on the ecosystems in which they live. The role of the scientist is to make it easier to identify sound biological positions on which individuals might make a moral stand. Put simply, an ethically defensible position will be informed by unbiased scientific knowledge.

This paper discusses the major concerns about kangaroo management. In particular, impacts of management on the welfare of kangaroos are discussed. It presents current information on a range of issues in the hope that the information may allow individuals to determine if management is justified and humane.