

FOR COMMENT

SWFSPP Annual Meeting 2024

Agenda Item 7.1

[last updated: 5 September 2024]

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INSECTOCUTOR PROJECT UPDATE**RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the SWFSPP Steering Committee:
 - a. NOTE the report on the Insectocutor project provided by NAQS
 - b. Discuss options for continuation, abandonment, or redesign of project

BACKGROUND

1. In 2018 it was discussed at annual SWFSPP meeting that there was no evidence that insectocutors were effective at trapping SWF on board livestock vessels and thus perhaps not viable as a mitigation strategy for protecting Australia against hitchhiking SWF on board vessels.
2. A project was designed to install insectocutors traps in a SWF endemic area, with a positive control trap (modified Lucitrap) to be sure there were SWF in the area.
3. The COVID Pandemic played havoc with getting traps to the identified site in Papua New Guinea, however traps finally delivered in March 2022.
4. It has become evident that there are some apparently insurmountable hurdles to enable the project to continue at the current site.

DISCUSSION

5. After several unanswered emails over the past 18 months, and me as the project manager being away on a year of parental leave, the timing worked perfectly last week for OCVO/NAQS staff on an animal survey in PNG to work a visit to the property into their itinerary. They sat down with farm manager Philip Lewis to run through the trapping process to identify where the hurdles are, and attempt solutions.
6. Setting the traps in locations initially planned is virtually impossible because there is no constant power source, nor shelter from monsoonal rain. The original plan was to run generators to power the traps but tricky to maintain fuel supply.
7. In late 2022 Philip thought he could build a phone box like shelter, and mount solar panels and battery/inverter set up, but has been caught up with busy farm priorities and not been able to source the equipment needed.

8. Unless the traps are set up close to the house they will likely get stolen or at least tampered with. Again option of building shelter but would need to be very robust to be secure.
9. Collecting the samples will be difficult – the insectocutors have been set near the house to test their function and collected heaps of flies but it's windy and they blow out when removing the trays.
10. Posting the samples will also be difficult – they'll need to be frozen for at least a week to avoid needing an import permit, then taken to Lae, probably refrozen at NAQIA lab, then transported to Port Moresby and onwards to Townsville. OCVO staff say that getting less time/cold chain sensitive serum samples out from sentinel herds is difficult, but the logistics of getting flies out for freight and avoiding rotting sounds impossible.
11. Philip and his manager John have been immensely helpful in trying to get this project to work but there just seems to be too many hurdles for it to work.

12. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The original agreement was that the Ramu Beef feedlot could keep the traps in exchange for their efforts for the project, and freight/logistics to get them back to Australia (especially the Bezzilures as dangerous goods) will be immense.

Options are

- To accept losses to the project and leave traps in place for use by Ramu Beef.
- Remove traps to another location - ?Singapore Zoo.
 - o Difficult and expensive to repackage Bezzilures as dangerous goods, and possibly get light traps clean enough for import into Singapore (or back to Australia)
- Redesign project to enable better outcomes – likely still expensive. Insectocutors approx. \$1000 each, modified Lucitraps not so expensive but freight for lures as dangerous goods is!

13. CONSULTATION/COMMUNICATION

Ramu Beef feedlot staff, DAFF Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer offshore program staff and NAQS staff all consulted on a forward plan. Ramu Beef not keen to continue, OCVO staff recommend logistically impossible to remove traps and lures as dangerous goods.

14. NEXT STEPS/ACTIONS

Recommend either abandon project and continue insectocutors on livestock vessels in the absence of better options (bezzilures too difficult for laystaff to manage on board vessel)

Or redesign project and invest in somewhere more accessible (not remote Markham Valley, PNG) and able to be visited to set up traps and monitor progress. (Singapore direct flights from Darwin and Broome, easy access to zoo)

Attachment A: SWF Insectocutor trial proposal

Attachment B: SWF trap project instructions for PNG