Cary speaks to John Kelly, Chief Executive, Kangaroo Industry Association of Australia about claims by farmers that kangaroos are in plague proportions, saying they want the Qld Government and Federal Government to help kick start export roo meat sales in order to reduce numbers. Cary says John McVeigh, Queensland Minister for Agriculture has stated that he would meet with the Russian Ambassador next month to discuss what could be done to restore trade, while Gordon Grigg, Biologist, University of Qld has said numbers would be high after good seasons and reduced shooting, and restarting the trade could avoid a sever animal welfare issue during the next drought. Kelly says Australia has had a vibrant kangaroo meat industry, and they used to sell manufacturing meat to Russia in 40 feet containers per day, but in 2009 they imposed market access suspensions. Kelly says despite mediocre efforts from state and commonwealth governments, they have been unable to restart that export market, and it has become a political issue. Kelly says they put to the new LNP Qld Government a detailed kangaroo industry recovery plan, but they think the industry is ‘worth two bob’. Kelly says they are willing to spend $35m on a race track on the Gold Coast or $60m at electricity subsidies for Brisbane, but not help the kangaroo industry because ‘they reckon they’re broke’. Kelly says kangaroos are one of the major causes of road accidents in Australia, and last week the NSW NRMA found that collisions have increased 12%. Kelly says ad hoc meetings and lip service has been going on for three years, but it is not coordinated and needs a dedicated political champion to take it on. Caller Gaye questions why money should be given to the kangaroo industry to restart it as opposed to other sectors. Kelly says his industry does not just create business and jobs for people, but delivers a very important public service by easing grazing pressure and loss of biodiversity.

Interviewees: John Kelly, Chief Executive, Kangaroo Industry Association of Australia

Duration: 11.17

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Interview with Ray Mjadwesch, Independent Consulting Ecologist and Gordon Grigg, Professor of Zoology at the School of Biological Sciences, University of Qld on the debate surrounding the kangaroo industry and whether or not they need to be culled. Mjadwesch says after 200 years of human impact on kangaroos, populations in all states have seriously declined from a couple of hundred million in the 1700s to around 30 million today. Grigg says he has been doing aerial surveys of kangaroos in several states for 25 years and there is no long term downward trend in numbers, with the population being similar today as it was in the 970s, however they can crash rapidly when a bad drought comes on. Grigg says he can understand the concerns of farmers regarding the damage kangaroos can cause to their crops. Grigg says he would never recommend culling kangaroos expect in unusual circumstances such as in confined parks. Grigg says kangaroos should be shot humanely, and their meat made good use of, and says harvesting reduces the average numbers by about 40%. Mjadwesch says data shows that populations have doubled and rapidly increased at times, but their reproductive capacity only runs between 3% to 8% under good conditions. Mjadwesch says he cannot see how shooting more than the reproductive rate replaces can be sustainable. Mjadwesch says he has submitted his research to the NSW Scientific Committee and the Threatened Species Scientific Committee which shows the decrease of populations, and Grigg says he cannot identify with any of that. Grigg does not believe Mjadwesch's assertion that harvesting kangaroos is leading to a population decrease. Grigg says he would like to see a continuing kangaroo meat industry, and providing a mechanism to support wool growers and other graziers whilst keeping kangaroo numbers down. Mjadwesch says in 1794 300lbs of kangaroo meat was being taken per week, and there has been an ongoing persecution of the animals due to urbanisation, while stock animals are consuming a lot of the resources previously open to kangaroos.

Interviewees: Gordon Grigg, Professor of Zoology at the School of Biological Sciences, University of Qld; Ray Mjadwesch, Independent Consulting Ecologist

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Press

Push to export roo problem
Courier Mail, 17/07/12, General News, Page 5
By: Brian Williams

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FARMERS claim kangaroos are in plague proportions and they want the Queensland and Federal Governments to help kick-start export roo meat sales as a way of reducing near-record numbers.

In 2009, Russia blacklisted kangaroo meat because of contamination. Australia has since met requirements but the market remains in limbo.

Kangaroo Industry Association of Australia chief executive John Kelly yesterday blamed lacklustre help from both governments.

Harvest Quotas for 2012

- Three species are harvested in Queensland - eastern greys, reds and common wallarcs
- Harvest quotas are set at 10 per cent to 20 per cent of each species numbers
- Current total harvest quota is 3,103,950 'roos
- As of June 30, 413,786 had been harvested
- Harvest is biased towards males because of their larger size
- Females make up fewer than 9 per cent of the harvest
- Harvest has been down because shooters cannot get on to wet paddocks

"For a minor $1 million investment, the Queensland Government could generate $100 million a year in export income," Mr Kelly said.

State Agriculture Minister John McVeigh said he would meet with the Russian ambassador next month to discuss what could be done to restore the trade.

"The Government has also asked the Agent-General in London, Ken Smith, to use his role as Queensland’s advocate to communicate with the Russians on behalf of Queensland kangaroo meat industry," he said.

AgForce spokesman Stephen Tully said kangaroo numbers passed 20 million last year in Queensland and were costing grain and grazing industries $75 million a year as they ate through pastures and crops.

University of Queensland biologist Gordon Grigg said numbers would be high after good seasons and reduced shooting.

If the trade could be restarted, it would help ease a major animal welfare issue when the next drought arrived, during which millions of animals would starve to death.

"The harvest is pretty humane," Professor Grigg said.

Pouch young are killed by a blow to the head, although there is an animal welfare issue with large joeys virtually out of the pouch but not ready to survive without their mother.

Mr Kelly said the roo industry was the most humane way of producing red meat, with animals dying without stress.

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