

6 December 2017

## Forestry Corporation member bulletin

The CPSU NSW, represented by Industrial Officer Rachel O'Shea and Delegate Nigel Fuller, attended Forestry Corporation's Hunting Risk Assessment Review on Wednesday 29 November.

Our CPSU delegate had put forward concerns to Forestry prior to the meeting to ensure we were on the agenda and that Forestry and DPI's Game Licensing Unit (GLU) would be prepared to answer any queries members had.

The forum covered an overview of hunting incidents recorded in FCNSW, the union perspective on risk, a GLU update and a workshop on risk assessment review.

We were told during the "overview of Incidents" that FCNSW had identified more training on the notification process will be given to staff.

CPSU members are concerned about pig dogs and quad bikes and how they are regulated.

No incident had been reported relating to use of pig dogs, however a number of State forests (mostly in softwood districts, such as four forests in Walcha-Nundle) have recently been opened up for night-time hunting with dogs.

Tracking equipment for dogs has changed since the regulation originally written in 2004 – but revised in 2012 – which refers to "radio-tracking" collars.

They are now outdated with cheaper – arguably better – "GPS" collars more commonly used. FCNSW and GLU say the written permissions have been updated to reflect the use of GPS collars rather than "radio-tracking" collars.

CPSU noted that GPS reliability (number of satellites) can drop off in late afternoon and into the night. This has implications, not only for exclusion zone compliance, but also for tracking GPS-collared dogs should they become lost.

GLU says it has never had an R-licensed hunter report a lost hunting dog. However, there is no mandatory reporting of lost dogs to GLU, so this may not mean much. CPSU knows staff witness lost hunting dogs in state forests occasionally. However, staff cannot determine whether the lost dog is part of a legal pig-hunting sortie.

Staff should be encouraged to formalise this reporting in RiskWare, as lost hunting dogs are not in the direct control of their owners and present an uncontrolled risk to staff and visitors.

Neither the change to include hunting at night with dogs in some state forests, nor the change to approve use of GPS collars on dogs rather than radio-tracking collars, are to be captured in any revision of the regulation any time soon. These changes are approved by other means.

The incident which involved a quad bike was resolved by GLU as a case of "no person of interest" in that R-Licensed hunters (who GLU canvassed by phone straight away after the incident was reported to them) denied using quad bikes and said that some else must have used the vehicle.

It is important to obtain a vehicle registration wherever possible in reporting these incidents involving illegal activities. However, finding the vehicle that carried the quad bike to the bush is not always possible or reasonable.



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Current exclusion signage at harvesting operations may be ambiguous when they notify a closure and say “a permit to enter is required”. Some hunters have interpreted their written permission as a permit to travel through the harvesting operation just as they do other hunting exclusions (without actively hunting). Contractors do not have the same view. The harvesting signage may require some review.

New fact sheets have been developed by Department of Primary Industries ([www.dpi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au)). *Licensed Hunting on State Forests in NSW* will be distributed to all staff over the next few months which will close out an action item from last year’s risk assessment.

Also this year’s publication from the GLU – the *NSW Game Hunting Guide* from DPI was launched in May this year. It is a handbook for hunting anywhere administered by DPI in NSW.

This is being distributed out into stores targeted as hunting and outdoors businesses, and to programs linked with *Crime Stoppers*, trade shows and events. There will be three YouTube videos and suggestions were made regarding a Facebook page.

More work needs to be done on workers feeling unsafe and perceived risk where they interact with hunters. The issue of psychological harm was given the attention of the meeting and it was agreed that some sessions (such as annual staff safety days) where staff could be briefed by GLU of their compliance works would help to demystify the process and give comfort that risks are being appropriately addressed. CPSU expressed further concern that the reporting protocol (RiskWare incident) should not be considered finalised until the staff member who reported the incident is briefed with the response from FCNSW and GLU. This to ensure staff don’t think their concerns go unheard. There is a welfare benefit here.

FCNSW has also agreed to pass all hunting-related incidents over to GLU as a matter of urgency. GLU had not had all hunting incidents in Riskware reported to them in the last 12 months.

