THE STABLE FLY ACTION GROUP INC (SFAG)

CHAIRMANS REPORT TO 21ST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

28 October 2026

Thank you all for attending this 21st AGM of SFAG.

Thanks also to our guests, Mr Ron Shepherd – Director of Invasive Species & Environment Biosecurity, Mr Peter Spackman CEO of Vegetables WA, and Shire of Gingin Stable Fly Officer, Mick Emmanuel.

The SFAG Committee have continued its efforts to minimise the effects of stable fly on the long-suffering landholders in the Gingin and surrounding districts.

Our small team of volunteers have met every month since our last AGM, with a number of ancillary meetings as well.

Meeting VWA & MLA

In October last year we met with Peter Spackman from the VWA and Michael Laurence from MLA in Perth. Mick Emmanuel and I attended with the hope that MLA might provide some funding for further research into programs to reduce stable fly breeding under Centre Pivot irrigation systems.

The upshot of this meeting was that MLA agreed to help fund the VWA to assist with this research, as long as VWA could get matching funds from another source. So far, I gather this has been unsuccessful.

Mick and I were impressed with the sincerity of Peter to try to solve the stable fly problem.

Biosecurity Council

Also in October, members of SFAG and Mick Emmanuel met with four members of the Biosecurity Council. These members initially met with the Shire of Gingin and then we joined them for further discussions and then a tour of TC Do's property, discussions with the Clifton Family and then on to the Bogdanich centre pivot operation.

The Biosecurity Council's remit is to advise the Minister for Agriculture. This tour was organised by the Minister following a meeting with SFAG in July 2025. The Biosecurity Council met with all 14 of the LGAs that were in the Management Plan.

We were told that the Biosecurity Council would present an interim report to the Minister in December and we might be able to view the final recommendations early in the new year.

We finally received the Biosecurity Council's report last week.... only took a year!

May - Change for SF

From Declared Pest C3 – Management to Unassigned Control Capacity (UCC)

From Stable Fly Management Plan plus BAM Regulations to just MP ... much better, we're told!

I'm sure that Mr Shepherd will be able to explain this in more detail.

July - Glenrowan Road Excursion

During discussions with a personal friend, John Partridge, who has an interest in biological farming practices, he suggested that a chap called Geoff Stamoulis, who owns a company called Cropping Solutions in South Australia may have some products that vegetable growers could use that may limit the extent of stable fly breeding.

After I had spoken with Geoff, I asked Mick Emmanuel to arrange a meeting between Geoff and a large vegetable grower with Centre-Pivot operations. This was organised for July 3rd at Glenrowan Road.

We contacted VWA to invite them to join the discussions, which subsequently happened. Our rendezvous was a little delayed as Geoff had to fly in from South Australia as well as pick up some associates. Once his group of four people arrived, we were ready to proceed to the farm, only to be informed that everyone was welcome, **except** the members of SFAG!

PJ went home but I accompanied the entourage on-farm, to make the introductions, and then was instructed to wait outside the gate.

The on-farm discussions proceeded for over 11/2 hours and subsequently I am told that the vegetable grower has received a report with recommendations.

Note: We are reliably informed that this grower is now moving his operations away from Glenrowan Road and up to a much larger operation in the North of the Shire on Sappers Road. Good news for the south west. Ironically, the animals at most risk from stable flies at this new site will be ones on another vegetable farm's "feedlot". We will watch with interest.

July - Updated SF Management Plan

On the 28th of July the Updated Management Plan was Gazetted. We received a copy of the Plan as well as the Companion Guide from Project Officer Jacky Grayson two days later.

Whilst the Management Plan has a few inconsistencies as well as some items left out, we have concerns about the following -

- The lack of any statement in either the Management Plan or the Companion Guide about restricting the use of Untreated Poultry Manure (UPM) in Irrigated Horticulture
- None of SFAGs recommendations were included in the Management Plan or Companion Guide except for the lifting of wheel ruts (somewhat obliquely). See 8(3) and 8(7)(b)
- Approved Measures have been taken out of the Management Plan
- Also in the Management Plan, the clause about spreading hay is strange. Spread in thin lines of 35cm wide (1.2feet)? Most hay rolls are 122cm wide (4 foot) so this will prove un-workable
- Inconsistencies between 8(3) and 8(7)(a) as well as 8(7)(b)

The key points in the Companion Guide that grabbed my attention are -

- the Requirements and Penalties relating to the Management Plan

  Up to $20,000 fine – landholders must use the Prescribed Control Measures in the Management Plan

  Up to $50,000 fine – if SF are found, an Inspector can issue PCN – non-compliance = fine

<u>Oct - Biosecurity Council Recommendations</u>

On the 23rd October we received the long-awaited Key Insights Summary of the Biosecurity Council.

READ KEY FINDINGS

<u>Conclusion:</u>

Key highlights since last AGM -

- Review and upgrade of the 2019 SFMP - waited nearly four years
- Finally getting a meeting with the Minister who subsequently initiated a review of the stable fly issue by the Biosecurity Council, who we met with in October 2025 and here we are a year later
- Change of stable fly status from Declared Pest C3 category to "Unassigned"
- Working with our "partners" in the vegetable Industry and left sitting on the side of the road while they talk to the people that **we** had organised to discuss ways to improve their productivity

I could be mistaken for thinking that we haven't really advanced much in the last twenty one years!

With that in mind, I have informed the SFAG Team that this would be my final AGM as President. However, if we cannot get anyone else to take my place for now, I will accept, but only until June 30th 2027.

I would like to stay on the committee for a little longer to see the following completed -

- The publishing of the Stable Fly Chronicle "The Long Fight"
- SFAG response to the SFMP and Companion Guide
- SFAG response to the Biosecurity Council recommendations to the Minister

However, if the local people that are being affected by stable flies cannot muster enough enthusiasm to join the SFAG committee then I'm afraid that will mean the end of SFAG.

As the Biosecurity Council put it – **"SF impacts are highly localised"**. Unfortunately, we still have many you that fall into this category and certainly meet the next criteria **"but can be severe where they occur".**

At one time we used to have outbreaks occurring all over the Shire of Gingin. Now they seem to be confined mainly to the south west corner of the Shire. An example of the change is the Beermullah area which used to be a "hotspot". One major vegetable farm stopped operations in the area and the problem diminished to almost nothing. Now, if there are stable flies reported in the area, they are either coming from a feedlot or storage piles of UPM which is going to be spread on pastures or hay crops.

Conclusion (cont):

As this will be my final President's Report, I would like to thank ALL the members of the community who have joined us in the endeavour over the past twenty one years.

Obviously, the current Committee is very dear to my heart, and I thank PJ, DK, and Clayton (aka Chris). You've done a great service to our community.

I would also like to give a special mention to the inaugural Shire of Gingin Stable Fly Officer Geoff Slater, as well as his extremely capable replacement, Mick Emmanuel.

Also, thanks to Dr Jacky Grayson from DPIRD who has tried hard to support us over several years.

Finally, my fondest thoughts go to the most professional secretary I have ever worked with, Jo Ottaway. Jo and I made a pact when we both joined SFAG that we would stay involved until the problem is alleviated. After twenty one years, time and other callings have meant that I will not continue to battle this intractable problem.

I can't say its been a pleasure, (due to the nature of the beast), but it certainly has been an honour to have tried my hardest to help the affected people (and animals) of this Shire, and other affected Local Government Authorities, over the last twenty one years, and I wish you all the best for the future.