



14 December 2011

## **Media Statement**

### **Cane toad baits deter native species**

Scientific trials investigating the use of specially-designed baits to deter native species from eating cane toads continue to provide encouraging results.

A collaborative study between the University of Sydney and the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) aims to reduce the impact of cane toads on a range of native carnivores.

DEC research scientist Dr David Pearson said the trials involved training species such as the yellow-spotted monitor (*Varanus panoptes*) and the endangered northern quoll (*Dasyurus hallucatus*) to avoid consuming cane toads by feeding them baits containing less toxic parts of the toad and a nausea-inducing chemical.

“The laboratory experiments are being done by University of Sydney researchers, who are using a technique known as conditioned taste aversion,” he said.

“The baits are formed into a small sausage and taste and smell like toads. Pilot studies have shown that water monitors (a type of goanna) and quolls quickly learn to associate toad taste and smell with nausea and subsequently avoid attacking toads.

“These exciting results could lead to the development of a cane toad bait that can be deployed in the field ahead of the invasion front to give predators, such as goannas, an opportunity to learn to avoid toads before they arrive.”

Professor Rick Shine from the University of Sydney said while the results were proving successful for some native species, more studies still needed to be done to determine if the baits worked in training highly-susceptible yellow-spotted monitors.

“Sixteen yellow-spotted monitors were collected from the Packsaddle floodplain, approximately six kilometres from Kununurra,” he said.

“Half of the goannas were offered aversion baits and half were not. We then attached radio transmitters to each goanna, so they could be located daily once they were released into the wild.

“We will continue to track them to see if they have learnt to avoid ingesting cane toads.”

In Western Australia, cane toads have spread past Kununurra, with extensive breeding occurring in irrigation areas.

DEC has also developed a series of posters that presents the collaborative research. To view the posters visit [www.dec.wa.gov.au/canetoads](http://www.dec.wa.gov.au/canetoads).

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