Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

Ref: MF25/2473

19 November 2025

Mr. Trevor Hold
Australian Advocacy Group
trevor.hold79@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Hold

Thank you for letter of 5 October 2025 to the Hon Tara Moriarty MLC, Minister for Agriculture, regarding fire ant management. The Minister has asked me to respond to you on her behalf.

In respect to your concerns regarding the economic impacts of complying with fire ant carrier movement restrictions, fire ants are classified as *prohibited matter* under the NSW *Biosecurity Act 2015*. The NSW Government remains firmly committed to protecting our state from the serious biosecurity risks posed by fire ants. To that end, we will continue to make and enforce clear and consistent laws regulating the movement of fire ant carriers, which are the primary means by which fire ants spread. All four known incursions of fire ants into NSW have originated from Queensland suppliers. Since December 2023, over 20,000 carrier movements have been declared from Queensland fire ant infested areas into NSW, underscoring the scale of the risk. We are resolute in our efforts to prevent further introductions and protect NSW's environment, economy, and communities.

We acknowledge that movement restrictions on fire ant carriers may present short-term economic challenges for producers. However, modelling is available that shows each Queensland state electorate division would need to spend an average of more than $2 million every year ($187million total; $128/year/household) if fire ants become firmly established in Queensland. Avoiding these long-term costs of fire ant control, fire ant-related medical services and fire ant-related veterinary visits outweighs the cost posed by compliance with short-term movement restrictions.

You have also raised concerns regarding human rights, private property, and individual choice. Biosecurity is a shared responsibility — one that requires participation by government, industry, and the community. As for the lawfulness of the exercise of powers by authorised officers appointed under the Queensland *Biosecurity Act 2014*, it would be inappropriate for NSW Government representatives or staff to comment on any actions taken under Queensland legislation. Your concerns can only be addressed by the National Fire Ant Eradication Program (NFAEP).

Regarding your apprehensions about PFAS and chemical use, all treatments used by the NFAEP are approved by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA). These products have undergone rigorous scientific assessment and are considered safe when used according to label directions and permit conditions. Additionally, as a signatory to the Stockholm Convention, Australia is prohibited from registering environmentally persistent pesticides, further ensuring the safety of approved treatments.

Scientific evidence, including necropsy and laboratory testing, does not support claims of harm to wildlife, pets, or livestock from fire ant treatments. Fire ant treatments used by the NFAEP have a long history of safe use and are specifically targeted to ants, posing minimal risk to humans, pollinators, and other animals when applied correctly.

While there is no scientifically validated evidence of physical harm to human health from fire ant treatments, the threat posed by fire ants themselves is significant. If fire ants establish in Queensland, each year they are expected to sting over 1.5million people (30million people), cause 115,679 additional medical visits, and trigger 30,848 people to develop anaphylactic reactions — posing serious health risks to the community.

It will not be possible amongst our current competing work demands to schedule a time to meet with you. We appreciate your engagement on this important issue and remain committed to protecting NSW from the threat of fire ants by use of proven eradication tools.

Yours sincerely,



Lisa Szabo

Executive Director
Biosecurity and Food Safety