



# CANE TOADS FOUND ON MORETON ISLAND

After Cane Toad Detection Dogs (CTDDs) found 2 cane toads and gave other significant indications of cane toads during this latest campaign, trainer Steve Austin warned that Moreton Island was at “the tipping point” – close to the point of no return in going down the path that Queensland and the rest of Australia has with the cane toad invasion. If Moreton Island is one of the few locations in coastal Queensland where cane toads have not yet established, what are the implications of these findings in relation to its’ cane toad free status?

The entry point for cane toads to Moreton Island is via the MICAT ferry. It has already been identified that cane toads can enter in vehicles, firewood, camping gear and building materials going to the Island – but what checks are there on this? With sightings of cane toads jumping out of the under-struts of rubbish bins in Brisbane as forks of a forklift go in to transfer the bins; a cane toad recently jumping off the MICAT; and our discovery of a cane toad in the under-struts of a bin at Cowan – it is obvious that rubbish bins to the Waste Transfer Stations are high on the list of entry.

Checking everything going to Moreton Island by Cane Toad Detection Dog would appear to be a common sense approach to maintaining the Island being cane toad free and avoiding “the tipping point”. Unless something more is done, Moreton Island will eventually succumb to the cane toad invasion and decimation of its’ wildlife.

## **Brisbane City Council Cane Toad Detector Dog Campaign 5-10 April, 2018 Supported by Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service and Tangalooma Resort**

This campaign covered Tangalooma to Cowan, to Bulwer and the Cape, to Eagers Creek and included NPWS campsites and townships apart from Koorinal. This was due to time constraints and difficult beach driving conditions to the south of the Island at this time of year.

Knowledge of the campaign and the impact cane toads have on wildlife was widespread amongst campers, members of the public and residents. A group of campers at North Point from the Central Coast of NSW said they now had cane toads in their back yards.

### **DAY 1: Tangalooma – Resort and Wrecks**

With assistance of visual and video display, Steve Austin spoke to an audience of holiday makers at the Tangalooma Education Centre. This was followed by a demonstration in the grounds. A dead cane toad was hidden and then located by a Cane Toad Detection Dog. (I believe the cane toad was the one that had previously escaped from the MICAT.)

The Wrecks campsites were then checked, along with the toilet block where there had been previous sightings, and the rubbish bins near the beach at the southern end of the campsites. Detector Dogs found no indications of cane toads.



*Steve Austin with CTDD Becky at the entrance to Cowan  
Cowan - 100 metres from where a live cane toad was found.*



*CTDD Becky at the Cowan Waste Transfer Station. The live cane toad  
was found in the under-struts of the middle bin.*

## **DAY 2: Ranger Station, Ben Ewa and Cowan Point Campgrounds, Cowan Township, Cowan and Bulwer Waste Transfer Stations**

The grounds of the Ranger Station were checked and an eDNA water sample (A1) taken from the creek nearby. At Ben Ewa Campground a group of school students from Grafton advised that a pig had disturbed their camp in the early morning. Cowan Point Campground was checked where dead cane toad remains were found on the previous campaign. eDNA water samples were taken from the culverts to the south (A2) and north (A3) of Cowan township. No indications of cane toads were found.

Immediately on checking the rubbish bins at the Cowan Waste Transfer Station, there were strong indications of cane toads. CTDD “Becky” quickly found a live cane toad in the under-struts of one of the bins. Cowan resident Mr. Tony Oakenful was there at the time of the finding. It is ironic that this toad was found 100 metres from the Moreton Island Cane Toad Free sign at the entrance to Cowan township.

Following this, Cowan was checked. Where there were strong indications of cane toads at the northern corner of Thomas Pamphlett and William Leslie Streets on the last campaign – there were no further indications. Indications of cats - and a cat kill of a dead dove - was found in bush at the southern beachfront of the fishing club. We then went on to check bins at Bulwer Waste Transfer Station where no indications of cane toads were found. Creeks around Cowan and Bulwer Waste Transfer Stations were dry and impossible to take water samples.

## **DAY 3: Western Beach campsites north of Cowan, Bulwer Township and Comboyuro Campground**

An eDNA water sample (A4) was taken from the creek at CB21 north of Cowan. A number of campsites along the western beach were checked and campers informed of the campaign. At Bulwer, there were 2 strong indications of cane toads around Castaways – in a garden beside toilets near the fire hydrant, and at a pipe at the western driveway entrance. Manager Nathan was on hand and advised he will monitor the area.

The northern end of Bulwer along The Strand and Moreton Streets, and 20 Marsh Street which gave strong indications on the last campaign, all revealed no indications. Dry conditions at the southern end of Bulwer proved fruitless, although the CTDDs found strong indications of cats and cat scats along The Strand and adjacent bushland south of Pilot Street. Lindsay Roberson’s property in Banksia Street was checked as there had been prior reports of a cane toad in building material bought to the island – but the CTDDs found no further indications

An eDNA water sample (A5) was taken at the creek near the helipad at the northern end of Bulwer. Comboyuro Campground gave extremely strong indications around the rubbish bins, but no cane toads were found. However, there was dirt and possible cane toad droppings in the under-struts of the bins.

If rubbish bins are left over full and unchanged – Moreton Rice – as termed by those involved (maggots falling from the bins particularly in warm weather), have the capacity to provide a food source for cane toads.

#### **DAY 4: North Point Campground, The Cape and Spitfire Creek**

An eDNA water sample (A6) was taken in the swimming hole between North Point Campground and Yellow Patch. North Point Campground was checked. The dogs proved a big hit in discussions with campers. Dogs detected indications of cats at the MIPC Nursery – but no cane toads – as was the case at the Cape carpark and lighthouse grounds. eDNA water samples were taken at Spitfire Creek (A7) and the creek north of Blue Lagoon Campsite (A8) on the ocean beach.



*Greg Curtis with CTDD Becky at CB15 where a cane toad was found.*

#### **DAY 5: Unsuccessful attempt to Koorinal, CB15 on western beach, Blue Lagoon Campground, WB3 on ocean beach and Eagers Creek**

We attempted to reach Koorinal via the western beach south of Tangalooma. The beach was very eroded, soft and the going difficult, so we decided to go via Middle Road and the ocean beach. The Tangalooma Bypass and Middle Road were no better. They were in poor condition and affected by the volume of tourist buses. We abandoned trying to reach Koorinal. Later we were told by a bus driver that there were multiple vehicles bogged on Middle Road that morning.

Stopping at Castaways in Bulwer, a camper from the Tweed in northern NSW informed us that he had a cane toad in his camping gear which was killed and buried. This was at CB15 (unmarked – no post at this campsite). We went to that campsite where CTDD Becky found the dead toad. An eDNA sample (A9) was taken from the adjacent creek.

Blue Lagoon Campground was checked, as was Warragamba Beach campsites and WB3 where there had been reports of cane toads, and Eagers Creek Indigenous site. All of these areas were quite dry. An eDNA water sample (A10) was taken from Eagers Creek. Rubbish bins were rechecked at Comboyuro Campground and Bulwer and Cowan Waste Transfer Stations. Bins at these township stations had been replaced since we last checked and were clean and in immaculate condition.

#### **DAY 6: Tangalooma Resort**

The entire grounds were searched for no indication of cane toads. Results of testing the eDNA water samples were not completed at the time of this report.

Manager Trevor Hassard should be commended for his hospitality and cooperation in providing an educational platform of the campaign to resort guests. So should Ranger in Charge Terry Christensen and NPWS Rangers for their cooperation in the campaign. I thank Dane Hansen and Brisbane City Council for the opportunity to participate in such a worthwhile initiative. It is hoped that firm preventative action can be taken to maintain Moreton Island's cane toad free status.

*Greg Curtis  
Moreton Island Protection Committee*