

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Ms Purick to the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water Security:

Crocodile Management

- 1. How many crocodile farms are there in the Northern Territory and where are they located and what is the ownership – that is, company name and/or individual name or organization under the Associations Act NT?**

There are 14 crocodile farm permits held by 12 companies/individuals as of January 2023. This includes a new Aboriginal-run enterprise at Ramingining. There are 10 farms in the greater Darwin area with the remaining three farms being located in the Victoria River Region, Coomalie Shire and the Murrumbidgee -Douglas Daly region respectively. There are six farms within the electorate of Goyder. As the industry has been recently the victim of a number of farm incursions by Animal Welfare activists, which creates both significant risk to human safety as well as a biosecurity risk, the Department does not provide specific identifying information on farms. More information about crocodile farming and trade is available at <https://nt.gov.au/industry/agriculture/livestock/crocodile-farming-and-trade>.

- 2. Do all the operational farms in the NT (including hatcheries and tourism ventures) have a “permit to keep protected wildlife” and if so, what is the commencement date of the permit and renewal dates for each farm or venture?**

All operational farms require a ‘Permit to Keep Protected Wildlife’ to authorise the keep and trade of saltwater crocodiles including Permit(s) to Import and Export saltwater crocodiles from the Northern Territory. The Crocodile Farm Enterprise Permit combines all three permits in a single permit document. The Crocodile Farm Enterprise Permit is valid for a period of 10 years and authorises the permit holder (crocodile farm) to keep, trade, import and export saltwater crocodiles subject to terms and conditions of the permit. The commencement and renewal dates vary for individual farm; however, the majority have expiry/renewal dates in 2025 or 2026. In the case of the Ramingining farm, a two year permit is in place to allow for the establishment of the farm. This will be converted to a 10 year permit following the finalisation of the current build phase and a final inspection by the Department. The recently constructed Marpu farm has an expiry/renewal date of 2031.

There are tourism ventures that may have permits to keep protected wildlife which would not come under the definition of an operational farm. Individuals or companies trading products derived from Saltwater Crocodiles taken are required to hold either a Permit to Keep Protected Wildlife or a Crocodile Farm Enterprise Permit.

3. Do valid permits have generic requirements and specific requirements in regards to biosecurity and if so, what are they?

Currently there are no generic or specific biosecurity requirements with regard to permits issued to the crocodile farming industry by the Department pursuant to the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976*.

Crocodiles are classified as being livestock for the purposes of the *Livestock Act 2008*. The Act provides disease control powers which include mandating biosecurity measures in a biosecurity management plan to assist with eradicating or managing a disease incursion or threat. The Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade (DITT), through the Biosecurity Animal Welfare Branch (BAW), provides guidance and support to assist the crocodile industry to develop and implement industry-based biosecurity management plans to manage their individual farm risks to prevent the introduction of infectious diseases and to prevent the spread of disease from an infected area to an uninfected area.

Under the [Code of Practice on the Humane Treatment of Wild and Farmed Australian Crocodiles 2009](#), endorsed by all Australia governments, there are health and hygiene requirements for aspects of crocodile farming such as water quality and health of hatchlings, which are important measures for biosecurity and managing risks of disease introduction. The Code of Practice is extensively used by the Territory's farmed crocodile industry.

4. Are crocodile farms required to submit an operational farm plan to the government for approval and adherence to any permit conditions?

No.

5. Do all crocodile farms have a biosecurity plan as agreed to following the outbreak of chlamydiosis in 2006 and if not, why not and are these plans reviewed on an annual basis by government officials?

The Biosecurity Animal Welfare Branch provides guidance and support to the Territory's crocodile industry to develop and implement individual farm biosecurity management plans to mitigate their individual biosecurity risks, to prevent the introduction of infectious diseases and to prevent the spread of disease from an infected area to an uninfected area. The *Livestock Act 2008* provides the ability to mandate biosecurity management plans as a control measure in the event of a disease incursion. In addition, under the

Meat Industries Act 1996, meat inspectors from BAW undertake routine audits to ensure meat hygiene requirements and biosecurity risk mitigation measures are in place to mitigate any disease risks with the harvesting of crocodiles.

Furthermore, BAW has provided assistance to the International Crocodile Farmers Association to develop global biosecurity standards with regard to crocodile farming. The standards focus on enhancing sustainability and humane treatment of farmed crocodiles, but also provide standards for quality assurance, traceability, biosecurity, and the welfare of people working in the industry.

DITT is currently progressing amendments to the *Livestock Act 2008* to further incentivise the development and implementation of biosecurity management plans to better mitigate individual farm biosecurity risks across all livestock industries, including for crocodiles

6. How many reports have been made of crocodiles that have escaped, are believed to have escaped, or have been stolen from farms in and around Darwin during the period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2022?

There were two reports of crocodiles being stolen during this time period, one in 2016 and one in 2020. Since 2015, there have been 46 escaped crocodiles from crocodile farms which were re-captured by the Department's Crocodile Team. 46% of these were in 2015 and 2016. All were less than 2.5 metres in size with the exception of three (2.6, 2.8, and 3.4 metres respectively).

7. How many physical compliance inspections of farms in and around Darwin have been undertaken from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2022 to ensure permit conditions, including fencing, are adhered to?

There were no inspections during the period 2015 to 2018. From 2018 to 2022 there were a total of 18 inspections noting that COVID restrictions significantly impacted on the ability to undertake site visits, especially during 2020. As of 7 February 2023, two inspections have been undertaken in 2022-23, with more planned to occur in the February to April period.

8. How many of those inspections were programmed and how many were random audits?

Inspections are generally planned to occur during periods when farms have eggs in the incubators (mid to late wet season). They are effectively random; however, the farm is contacted a few days prior to ensure access to incubators can be arranged.

9. Were any permit breaches identified as a result of those inspections and, if so, what were the actions taken in regard to those breaches?

No significant breaches have been recorded through these inspections.

10. What was the value of production for the 2021/2022 year?

- Currently there are no production values for 2021-22.
- In line with annual reporting timeframes, the 2021-22 values are expected to be released by the Crocodile Farmers Association of the NT (CFANT) around March/April 2023.
- The 2020-21 production values were estimated at \$24.2 million.
- The 2020-21 production value is published in the Primary Industry and Fisheries economic profile (refer page 15) available online at <https://industry.nt.gov.au/economic-data-and-statistics/primary-industry/economic-profile>

11. Is the Northern Territory Crocodile Farming Industry strategic plan being reviewed given it expired in 2021 and if not, why not?

The Strategic Plan is the product of the industry, not government. The Northern Territory Government is currently supporting the development of the new industry-led CFANT strategic plan. The plan will build on the previous strategy and outline key actions to facilitate sustainable growth of the crocodile industry in the Territory.