



NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2020



Background - Murchison Regional Vermin Council (MRVC)

The Murchison Regional Vermin Council (MRVC) is a statutory organisation which operates under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1995. Member councils are the Shires of Sandstone, Mount Magnet, Yalgoo and Cue. Each member Council nominates two delegates to serve on the MRVC and delegates elect from amongst themselves the Chairperson.

The MRVC was established in 1963 for the purpose of rehabilitation and maintenance of the No. 1 Vermin Fence and No. 2 Vermin Fence. The No. 1 Vermin Fence is 559 kilometres in length commencing at the 80 mile peg south near Lake Moore and ending at a location approximately 20 kilometres north of the Meekatharra/Wiluna Road. The No. 2 Vermin fence extends west from the No. 1 Vermin Fence for a distance of 163 kilometres terminating approximately 66.5 kilometres south east of the Great Northern Highway on the north western boundary of the pastoral station "Beebyn".

Both fences were established over one hundred years ago to prevent the movement of rabbits from the east. Today control of rabbits is not the issue and the fence now plays a critical role in preventing the movement of wild dogs from the east into the Mid-West/Murchison region where the grazing of small stock is the principal activity of many pastoral enterprises. Both fences also play a role in preventing wild dogs and emus moving into the Agricultural regions of the Mid West.

In 2014 the MRVC took over from the Shire of Mount Magnet the responsibility for arguing the case for government funding to construct the Murchison Region Vermin Cell. This involved obtaining funding of some \$4.2M to extend the No 2 fence by approximately 285 km to join up with the State Barrier Fence. These funds were obtained in 2018 and 2019 and work on extending the fence is underway with a completion date of December 2021.

Once completed the Murchison Region Vermin Cell will enclose 55 pastoral leases. The MRVC is working closely with the Meekatharra Rangelands Biosecurity Association (MRBA), the organisation responsible for the control of wild dogs within the area of the vermin cell. The MRBA is an Incorporated Association, set up under the WA Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act, with membership of all pastoral lessees within the vermin cell. Once the vermin cell is completed and wild dogs are controlled within, pastoralists will once again have the opportunity to produce small stock, such as sheep and goats, on a sustainable basis.

MRVC delegates as of 30 June 2020 are:

Chairman	Jorgen Jensen	Shire of Mount Magnet
Deputy Chairman	Les Price	Shire of Cue
Delegates	Ross Pigdon	Shire of Cue
	Carol Hodshon	Shire of Sandstone
	David Lefroy	Shire of Sandstone
	Jason Homewood	Shire of Mount Magnet
	Greg Payne	Shire of Yalgoo
	Percy Lawson	Shire of Yalgoo

As required under the Local Government Act the MRVC employs a Chief Executive Officer. This is a part time position currently occupied by Geoff Brooks. The Shire of Mount Magnet provides administrative support and other than the CEO there are no other employees.

Functions of the MRVC

The MRVC has two major functions:

The first function is to maintain and where necessary upgrade the No 1 and No 2 fences. The 391 km section of the No 1 fence from the eighty-mile peg in the south to Gum Creek (the northern boundary of Hillview Station) is maintained to a dog proof standard. The 168 km section of the No 1 fence north of Gum Creek is maintained to a cattle proof standard. The 163 km section of the No 2 fence is maintained to a dog proof standard.

The day to day operation of the MRVC including fence maintenance is funded from contributions by member shire councils and “fence rentals” that are charged to pastoralists that benefit from having the MRVC fence as a boundary.

In the current financial year, the Shires of Yalgoo, Mount Magnet and Cue will each contribute around \$32,000 with the Shire of Sandstone contributing \$11,000 making a total of \$107,000. Fence rental income this financial year is estimated to be \$7,700

Two years ago, the Shire of Meekatharra withdrew from the MRVC however under a three-year transitional arrangement agreed to contribute some \$20,000 per year. 2020/2021 is the last year of this transition and a detailed submission is being prepared seeking to extend this arrangement.

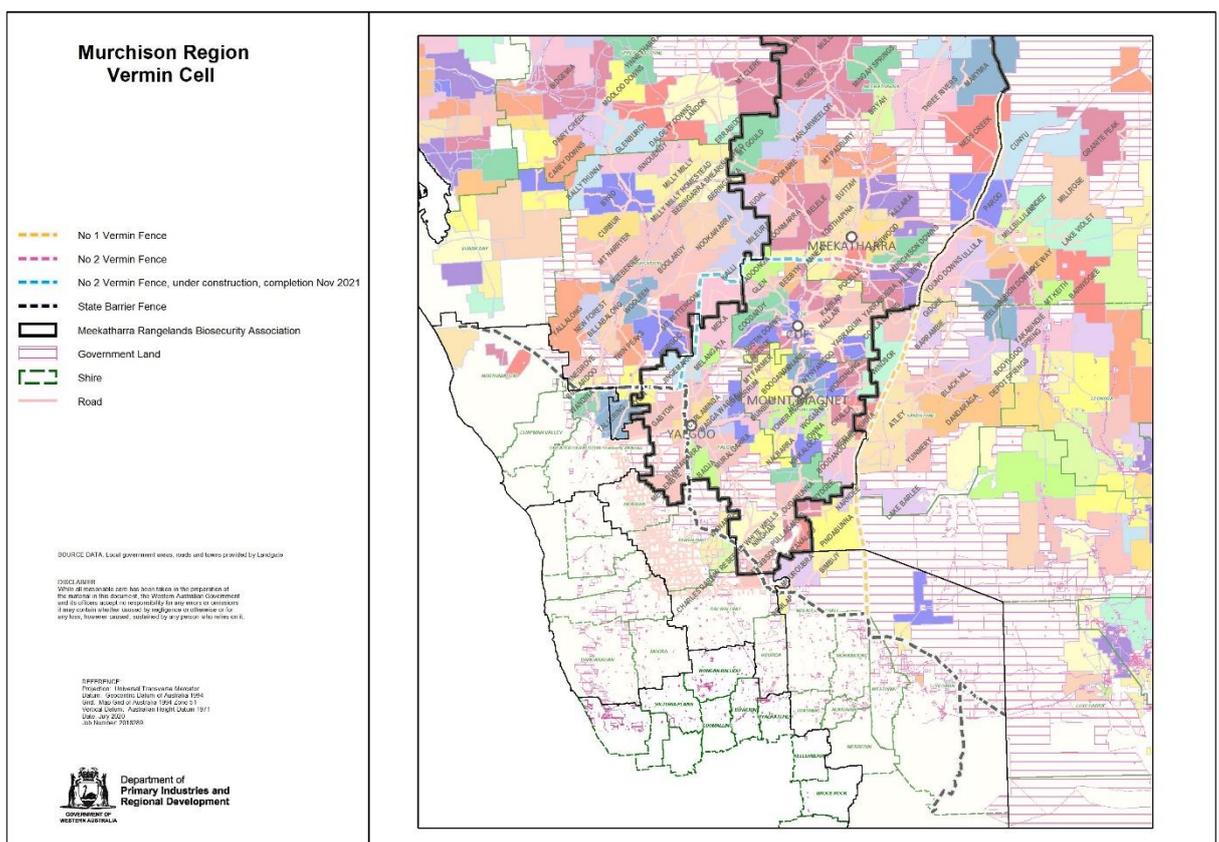
The second function is to construct a 285km extension of the No 2 fence to join up with the State Barrier Fence. To date the clearing and grading of the fence alignment has been completed and some 108 km of fencing has been constructed. Tenders have been called for construction of the next 120 km and it is expected that the full 285 km will be completed by December 2021.



Construction of the Murchison Region Vermin Cell has been strongly supported by all levels of government. The cost of constructing the 285 km extension is some \$4.218 M with funding contributions as follows:

- Commonwealth Government – Building Better Regions and Drought Funding - \$2.468 M.
- WA Government – Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development \$1.144 M
- Local Government – Shires of Yalgoo, Mount Magnet, Sandstone and Cue - \$0.606 M

The following is a map showing the No1 and No2 Fences and the Murchison Region Vermin Cell.



Return to Small Stock Production

A return to small stock production within the Murchison Region Vermin Cell is still several years away. The MRBA is currently working hard with pastoralists to control wild dog numbers. Once the cell is completed wild dog control efforts will need to be doubled and to this end the MRBA is doing everything possible to source the funding required to employ the additional doggers and other resources that are required.

The financial support from all levels of government for the Vermin Cell demonstrates a confidence that once again the production of small stock in the pastoral areas can be a viable activity. This support, particularly from the Shires, recognizes the importance of the pastoral industry to regional communities by bringing in income and employing people.

It is now up to the pastoral industry to take advantage of the opportunity that construction of the Murchison Region Vermin Cell presents.

This is the first of a number of newsletters. MRVC Councilors, member Shires and the MRBA have difficult decisions ahead that are required to ensure the long-term integrity of the Vermin Cell along with the control of wild dogs within. Your input into these decisions will be invited and much appreciated.

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