



Friday 19<sup>th</sup> August 2016

## RICE GROWERS ALERTED TO DUCK CONTROL STRATEGIES

NSW Department of Primary Industries' (DPI) Game Licensing Unit has advised Riverina rice growers to remain vigilant and continue to monitor wild duck presence in their crops this spring.

DPI senior native game bird management officer, Patrick O'Brien, said recent rains have improved waterfowl habitat throughout much of inland NSW, particularly within the rice growing areas.

"This year wild ducks are predicted to breed in quite large numbers and we expect they will be ready to fly during rice sowing," Mr O'Brien said.

"To help growers protect their crops I encourage them to take advantage of the DPI Streamlined Licensing System by ticking the opt-in box on their rice seed order form to obtain a Native Game Bird Management Licence and a quota allocation.

"This licence is part of the Native Game Bird Management program, which allows landholders to sustainably manage native game birds on agricultural land with the help of licensed and insured hunters who volunteer their time and resources."

Mr O'Brien said the program also offers a number of services to assist landholders

"The Landholder Register provides hunters with a list of licensed landholder contact details, while the Hunter Register gives landholders direct access to a list of licensed, insured hunters who have indicated their mid-week hunting availability and preferred hunting regions," he said.

Mr O'Brien said as a result of the DPI Streamlined Licensing System there was a significant increase in the number of rice growers licensed last year, with a higher participation rate expected this year.

Rice Growers Association Executive Director, Andrew Bomm, said the industry appreciated recent improvements to DPI's management of wild ducks, as ducks have the potential to cause significant damage to rice crops, particularly in the early establishment phase, resulting in economic loss to rice growers.

"Recent changes to the legislation mean hunters can now protect rice crops from duck damage at night, which is a great help to rice growers as that is when most damage is done. In the past, hunters were limited to daylight hours," he said.

Everyone who hunts native game birds in NSW needs to hold a valid NSW Game Hunting Licence, and they must also pass a test about identifying different waterfowl species before they can take part in the Native Game Bird Management program.

DPI Game Licensing Unit hunting compliance officers will be monitoring illegal hunting activity throughout the rice growing region and responding to reports of illegal or suspicious activity.

DPI urges the community to report illegal hunting through its Shut the Gate on Illegal Hunting program [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/hunting](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/hunting)

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**Photo caption:** Deniliquin rice grower Bill Holden who will be calling on his regular licensed hunters to protect his rice crop this year discusses this season's duck management with DPI senior native game bird management officer, Patrick O'Brien.