

UNDER FIRE



A Viva! report on the killing of kangaroos for meat and skin

Viva!

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Viva!'s campaign to stop the kangaroo massacre is supported by more than 40 Australian animal welfare and wildlife groups

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Introduction

Imagine this. A mother kangaroo, grooming her beautiful joey at night in the vast wild outback, hears the sound of a four wheel drive and stands transfixed, sensing danger. Searchlights are shone at her. A man takes aim, supposedly to shoot her in the head - but blows a hole in her neck. She falls in pain, helpless to save her joey who retreats into her pouch. But there's no escape. The hunter pulls the joey out of his mother's blood spattered body, tosses him to the ground and stamps on his head. He writhes in agony and is left to die. (Older joeys who frantically hop away when their mothers are shot, have no chance of survival. They die a slow, lonely death from starvation or cold.)

The shot mother does not die instantly. She struggles as the hunter slits her leg open, thrusts a hook through it and hangs her upside down on a truck. She is knifed, gutted, her head, tail and legs tossed aside. This is the fate of Australia's national emblem.

The killing of Australia's kangaroos constitutes the biggest land wildlife massacre in the world, surpassed only by the decimation of the American bison in the last century. In its investigation, including trips to Australia in 1998, 2001 and 2002 by myself at the invitation of wildlife and animal protection groups over there, Viva! has made a series of discoveries which are amongst the most distressing it has ever come across.



Juliet Gellatley of Viva! meets an orphaned joey during a visit to Australia

Further, the killing is justified with myths. Traditionally the kangaroo has been seen as competition by farmers. Although this view can be proved to be mistaken, the Australian Government favours the landowner over wildlife. Doug Reilly, one of Australia's most respected and knowledgeable kangaroo experts, of Chinaman Creek Environmental

Research Station, Winnowie Conservation Park, states: "To be able to undertake the largest wildlife slaughter in the world today it was necessary to undertake a long and sustained program of misinformation within Australia to convince the community that these animals are in plague proportions throughout the country areas. This was achieved by presenting the kangaroo as a 'resource' that needed to be exploited. There are many examples of this entrenched 'destruction culture' now being undertaken in Australia." (44)

This report examines the devastation wrought by the kangaroo industry. It exposes the threadbare science that the myths and half-truths profered for the justification of the killing is based upon. The time to protect the beautiful and unique kangaroo is here – I hope you will join us.



Juliet Gellatley, Viva!

The Export Trade in Kangaroo Meat and Skin

The official number of kangaroos set to be killed for export in 2006 is 3.8 million, slaughtered mainly for their skin and meat. Official statistics ignore the millions of joeys (young kangaroos) who also die when their mothers are shot, which vastly increases the true scale of the slaughter. When non-commercial and illegal kills are included, together with the large number of road kills, the figure could be doubled.

Viva! Ends the UK Trade



Juliet Gellatley speaks on BBC Radio One and British TV at a London demonstration against kangaroo meat.

According to the Kangaroo Industry Association, 80 per cent of kangaroo meat sold for human consumption is exported overseas (45). Viva! ran a successful three-year campaign from 1997 to 2000 to stop the sale of kangaroo meat from supermarkets in the UK. Sainsbury's was the most determined to keep selling the meat and supplied it nationwide. It vigorously defended the trade but suddenly withdrew one week before Viva! was due to run

another Day of Action outside its stores to highlight the suffering caused by the kangaroo killing. The Days of Action involved more than 100 local Viva! groups holding photocalls, demonstrations and talking to the public at any one time at stores all over the nation. Tesco withdrew from the trade after an extensive campaign by Viva!. Somerfield has refrained from introducing kangaroo meat in over 500 stores due to Viva!'s campaign and large contract caterers acknowledged Viva! as the reason they stopped selling the meat. The British public's support for Viva!'s campaign was huge, with many people refusing to shop at stores that sold kangaroo meat.

This quote from the Australian newspaper, Northern Territory News, shows the success of Viva!'s campaign:

'South Australia-based Australian Meats, one of five major exporters of kangaroo, said that the ban on the sale of meat in Britain had destroyed its \$1 million a year export business. The company handed back their export licence and Dennis Grantham, the manager said:

"We have stopped production altogether to Britain... we were exporting close to 400 tonnes of kangaroo meat a year. The decision has also affected our exports to other countries including the US."

Further, the Australian meat industry complain in the food press (*Food Processor*, April/May 1998) (1):

"When Viva! successfully lobbied Tesco in the UK to remove kangaroo meat from sale, the deputy prime

minister and primary industries minister contacted the chairman of Tesco to plainly state that kangaroo meat production meets every required standard. But despite the intervention Tesco still pulled the meat from sale.”

This illustrates the level of support that the kangaroo industry has in Australia, with politicians at the highest level supporting the killing.

The Australian Government failed to persuade the British public to support its massacre of kangaroos for meat and so is actively turning to other markets - eg Asia, the USA, Bulgaria, Czech Republic and EU countries such as Germany, France, Belgium and Holland.

In recent years, detailed figures have not been made public but an overview of the kangaroo industry by the Australian Government body the RIRDC (Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation) shows that the major importing countries for kangaroo meat are the Russian Federation (74 per cent of the total in the three years up to 2004), Papua New Guinea (five per cent), France (four per cent) and Germany (four per cent). In the same time period, the export market for pet food was worth \$330,000 (Aus), with the major markets being Macau, the United States and Indonesia. In total, Australia exported 9.5 million kg of kangaroo meat (inclusive of pet food) and 1.7 million kangaroo skins in 2004 (71).

Kangaroo Products and Value

The use of kangaroo meat for human consumption has only been legal in South Australia since 1980. In other Australian States the sale of kangaroo meat other than for pet food was not allowed until 1993 when it was legalised in New South Wales. At the same time, mutual recognition legislation came into being, under which products permitted for sale in one state cannot be disallowed in another, making the sale of kangaroo meat in all States possible from that time.

As seen above, kangaroos are killed commercially for their meat and skin. Traditionally, their skin has been used to make football boots and their meat used in pet food. John Kelly of the Kangaroo Industries Association of Australia says:

“Many people don’t realise that most of the goals kicked in world class soccer are kicked with kangaroo leather.”

Kangaroo meat exports (2001*)

Russia	857272 kg
France	486862 kg
Netherlands	130689 kg
Germany	125264 kg
Macau	82992 kg
Belgium	72406 kg
Austria	56502 kg
Czech Republic	51807 kg
Spain	34043 kg
Singapore	34000 kg
Malta	20000 kg
South Africa	18278 kg
Vanuata	17500 kg
Papa New Guinea	17017 kg
Indonesia	16750 kg
China	16373 kg
UK	8500 kg
USA	5517 kg
Portugal	3754 kg
Bulgaria	2615 kg
Japan	1841 kg
New Caledonia	1818 kg
Switzerland	1100 kg
Italy	200 kg
Hong Kong	85 kg
Total kg	2063185 kg

*Source: Environment Australia.**

Latest detailed figures available

Viva! wonders why the sports shoe companies have not promoted this fact and aims to promote it for them.

It seems ironic that Australians don't like kangaroo meat and consistently reject it for human consumption. This is partly why the industry is concentrating its efforts on exporting the country's wildlife for meat. The industry boasts it has found new markets in Russia, Romania and Serbia where kangaroos are reduced to salami and sausages. Other parts of the kangaroo are made into such essential items as bottle openers (paws), wall mounts (heads), purses (scrotum) and golf bags (skin).

The gross value of production of the kangaroo industry was an estimated \$37.6 million (Aus) in 2004 (71) (which reflects the total amount paid to kangaroo shooters at the meat processing plant gates).

The industry claims that it employs 4,000 people and is worth in total Australian \$200 million (26). This figure does not account for the government support it has received.

Tax Payers Fund the Kangaroo Killing

In 1999 the Australian Government's Ministry of Agriculture launched an initiative to help fund the development of the kangaroo industry. It is administered by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) and over half its funds are from tax payers and the rest from industry. The industry is supposed to competitively bid for funding, however information provided to Animals Australia and the Australian Wildlife Protection Council under Freedom of Information legislation shows that decisions on who gets the R&D funds are effectively made by the Kangaroo Industry Association!

Jobs for the Boys

The RIRDC makes its decisions on funding of kangaroo industry projects by taking advice from the Kangaroo Industry Advisory Council (KIAC), whose chairperson is nominated by the Kangaroo Industry Association (29)! KIAC's other members are representatives of kangaroo meat production/marketing; kangaroo human consumption, meat production and marketing and kangaroo skin production and marketing. There is a single non-industry representative - the RIRDC member of the New Animal Products Program, whose aim is to 'accelerate the development of viable new animal industries'.

One example of a grant - the industry received \$170,000 in 1999 to 'improve' kangaroo leather. Minutes of a meeting of the KIAC (24/3/2000) show that a proposal by John Kelly of Lenah Game Meats for funding for 2000/2001 'to improve the kangaroo industry image' was accepted for funding. RIRDC approved a grant of \$18,500 with a similar amount to be provided by the industry (29).

Kelly is the Development Manager of the Kangaroo Industry Association and its president is Ray Davis. Davis was also the chair of the KIAC when the grant for Kelly was approved.

Kelly states that tax payers money is being used to "improve public perception of the environmental wisdom, sustainability and responsible controls of the kangaroo harvest, leading to improved sales". He also says: "Ongoing public upimaging of the kangaroo industry is necessary to counter the continued efforts to

denigrate it by radical animal liberationists." (29)

Australia's then federal agriculture minister, Warren Truss, actively promoted the kangaroo killing. He declared in a media release of 13 June 2001:

"I refute claims by animal welfare lobbyists that kangaroos are harvested inhumanely and that their meat is unhealthy." (30)

He further claims: "Kangaroos are harvested by licensed shooters with a strict code of practice that was produced with the assistance of animal welfare groups." (30)

The umbrella group for animal organisations, Animals Australia, responds: "We were asked to comment on the Code about 11 years ago - not one of our proposals was taken up! The Code is not enforced, nor enforceable in remote outback regions. Kangaroos often suffer and many will die in agony. The industry is the shame of Australia."

Which Kangaroos are Killed Commercially?

It is often a surprise to people first studying the kangaroo debate that (according to 2005 statistics) the industry kills six species of kangaroos and wallabies commercially.

Kangaroos/wallabies are commercially killed in five States ie Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia,



In 2006, 3.8 million kangaroos were earmarked for slaughter by the Australian Government; this figure did not include baby joeys, illegal kills, roadkill and non-commercial killings

Western Australia and Tasmania (17, 32). Other States allow lesser killing by land owners for 'damage mitigation', but do not allow larger scale killing for meat/skin. Red Kangaroos, Eastern Grey and Western Grey Kangaroos make up 95 per cent of the kill for export (32).

John Kelly of Lenah Game Meats, Tasmania, boasts: "Ours is the only state that harvest wallaby, 'the veal of kangaroo'. Lenah wallabies are all taken from pasture rather than the bush and are no more than three years old." (Mercury, 5 August, 1998)

Commercially killed animals are:

Name of Species	States where killed
Red Kangaroo (<i>Macropus rufus</i>)	Qld, NSW, SA, WA
Eastern Grey Kangaroo (<i>M. giganteus</i>)	Qld, NSW
Western Grey Kangaroo (<i>M. fuliginosus</i>)	NSW, SA, WA
Wallaroo or Euro (<i>M. robustus</i>)	Qld, NSW, SA,
Bennetts Wallaby (<i>M. rufogriseus</i>)	Flinders Island, Tas
Tasmanian Pademelon (<i>Thylogale billardierii</i>)	Flinders Island, Tas

Qld=Queensland

NSW=New South Wales

SA=Southern Australia

WA=Western Australia

Tas=Tasmania

The Law Governing the Kill

Under Australian law, the individual States have responsibility for wildlife management within their state boundaries, whereas the export of all wildlife and wildlife products falls under the provisions of the Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Imports and Exports) Act 1982 with Environment Australia administering the Act and giving advice to the relevant federal minister (32).

In reality, Australian wildlife groups say that Environment Australia (EA) does not protect wildlife - but does the opposite. EA implements legislation designed to ensure that kangaroos are killed, 'harvested' and exported. This total exploitation of kangaroos provides a financial profit for Australians prepared to accept the needless killing of the species.

Those scientists who advise the minister for EA make sure that there is no voice for the welfare of kangaroos, tourism or scientists that argue against the 'cull'. The Australian Wildlife Protection Council says of the EA: "The disregard for important stakeholders like the \$6 billion nature-based tourism industry, and breaches of ecological and scientific oversight are indeed very serious. In reality, Environment Australia does not provide legislation to protect kangaroos and no one accepts responsibility for cruelty to them." (See section Enforcing the Code on page 13.)

How Many Kangaroos are Killed?

The general trend since the early 1970s has been a steady increase in the number of animals killed commercially, from 885,000 in 1975 to 3.8 million in 2006.

In addition, millions more animals are legally killed non-commercially. The extent of the non-commercial kill can be shown by the Tasmanian wallaby kill figures, where more than one million animals were shot in one

year non-commercially - when the official quota was set at 250,000. In 1986, the Queensland Government stated that the legal non-commercial kill in addition to the quota was 500,000. By 1991 a Queensland National Parks and Wildlife officer estimated that: "One million kangaroos are shot annually in that state in addition to the commercial quota."

The illegal kill is also not accounted for in the quota figures; nor are the joeys in the pouches and young at foot who always die when their mothers are shot.

According to the Australian Wildlife Protection Council:

"...the number of kangaroos and wallabies actually killed each year is as high as TWICE THAT OF THE FEDERALLY SET COMMERCIAL QUOTA."

In other words, in 2006, the Government set official quota for the number of kangaroos to be killed at 3.8 million; in reality millions more will be slaughtered.

Cruelty to Kangaroos

The following statement is typical of the Australian Government and multiple retailers that sold kangaroo meat in the UK and still sell it abroad:

Retailer: "the sale of kangaroo meat in no way causes undue stress to the animals".

Below, this report examines different aspects of animal welfare in relation to the kangaroo slaughter, in answer to statements released by Sainsbury's when they sold the meat and the Australian High Commission, UK.

Retailer: "The professional shooters involved in the cull are licensed and fully trained. They must comply with strict government laws demanding a code of conduct."

Kangaroos are supposed to be killed by licensed shooters who are supposed to understand a Code of Practice governing the killing. The statement above implies that all kangaroos killed for meat/skin are shot by professional shooters. This is not the case. In fact, according to the Australian Wildlife Protection Council, many shooters are itinerant part-timers. A pro-industry report confirms this, stating: 'Shooters are almost always self-employed' and they are mainly part-time because kangaroo products are 'low-value' (32).

In addition, the illegal trade supplies a substantial number of animals for meat/skin.

The Code the AHC and retailers refer to is the 'Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos' (31). However - the reason it is called a Code is because it is precisely that. It is a guideline for shooters to follow but lacks any clout in law. The National Kangaroo Campaign, Australia state:

Legal kangaroo commercial kill quotas 1975 to 2006:

1975	885,000
1980	2.9 million
1990	3.9 million
1998	4.1 million
1999	5.7 million
2000	5.5 million
2001	5.5 million
2002	6.9 million
2005	3.9 million
2006	3.8 million

THESE QUOTAS ARE FOR EXPORT ONLY AND DO NOT REPRESENT THE TOTAL NUMBER OF KANGAROOS KILLED. (Note that the kangaroo industry quote these commercial killing figures for export as if they were the total kill.)

“The Code is a voluntary code only and no provision exists in it for permits/licences to be suspended in the event of failure to adhere to the Code.”

As of January 2006, the Code is still under review, but there is little optimism that any changes will result in welfare improvements.

The Code falls down badly in many areas and has done nothing to lessen the concern for the level of cruelty to kangaroos. For example:

Joeys

The Australian High Commission, London, claims “the Government Code demands that joeys are put down immediately and humanely”.

Mother kangaroos often have a joey in pouch and a joey at foot - neither can survive without her. The Code states that pouch young of a shot female ‘must also be killed. Decapitation with a sharp instrument in very small hairless young or a properly executed heavy blow to destroy the brain in larger young...or by a shot to the brain’ must be used. When I was in Australia, amateur hunters admitted to cases of joeys being used as footballs; to stamping on joeys’ heads (but not killing them); to using crowbars or bashing their heads against a wheel brace or just leaving them to die.



Up to a million joeys are killed each year, discarded as ‘useless’ by-products of the kangaroo meat and skin industry

(Even for those joeys which are dragged out of their mother’s pouch and killed according to the Code’s recommendations - I hardly think that the Commission’s description of ‘put down’ conjures up the reality.)

The code does not even make a reference to how older joeys should be dealt with! They are completely dependant on their mothers for milk, warmth in the cold winter nights, protection from predation and emotional support. Without their mothers, they are left to die of starvation or cold or from predation (25).

Dr John Auty BVSc has studied the killing of kangaroos in all Australian States. He firmly maintains that:

“Shooters often have a thorough contempt of the law and the Code. They commit cruelty on a regular basis.”

Dr Auty’s credentials to speak on this subject are far more persuasive than Sainsbury’s. He has post graduate qualifications in veterinary science and was chief agronomist in the Northern Territory; assistant director of the Australian Bureau of Animal Health and has worked in the outback for many years where he studied kangaroos.

Viva!’s research shows that the killing of joeys is obscene and unavoidably cruel.

Other failures of the Code to protect kangaroos include the fact that:

- Some firearms used are unsuitable eg shotguns and small rifles when used on wallabies are unlikely to

cause instant death.

- Laws relating to the killing of kangaroos vary between States and some laws contradict the Code. For example, in Western Australia there is an open season where shooters can operate without a licence and do not have to stick to the Code.
- Most of all, wildlife authorities do not have the ability to enforce the Code. There are not enough staff to cover the vast distances and they rely on the shooters to keep them informed.

Source: National Kangaroo Campaign, Australia

Most telling is the Code itself, which states: 'No matter how carefully the shooter aims, some kangaroos will not be killed outright.' (31)

Enforcing the Code

The kangaroo industry state that to enforce the Code of Conduct: "National Parks and Wildlife Rangers CONSTANTLY conduct unannounced inspections."

This is nonsense. Even if the wildlife authorities had powers to enforce the Code they could not use them as the shooting takes place at night in remote areas without monitoring.

The Australian Wildlife Protection Council says: "The code of practice is legally unenforceable."

The number of kangaroos allowed to be killed in New South Wales in 1998 was 1.3 million and yet in 1997 the NSW Parks Law Enforcement Officers were being reduced from a mere eight down to six (18).

And in any case, in direct contradiction to the kangaroo industry's claim, the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service state:

"Cruelty to kangaroos are regulated and dealt with under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals legislation....NPWS does not have direct access to or maintain records on prosecutions under that legislation."
(8 December 1996)

Cruelty to kangaroos is ignored by wildlife authorities at both State and Federal level.

Further, commonwealth powers in relation to wildlife are restricted to the control of exports under Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Exports and Imports) Act 1982. This allows no power to link cruelty or animal welfare to decisions made as to the number of kangaroos being killed for export (17, 19).

Under Fire

"Kangaroos are strictly protected" Australian High Commission.

Men drive though the bush in four wheel drives, searching for wild kangaroos which they illuminate with

powerful searchlights. They are then shot, supposedly in the head. For many animals it is the throat or neck, leaving them struggling and still conscious when they are dragged to the truck. A kangaroo shooter of 20 years who moved to London, UK told Viva! in 1998 (and reiterated a similar quote to the *London Evening Standard* in 2001):



“We often shot kangaroos in the leg because it was a much easier target than the head. You hoped that it would slow them enough to find them and finish them off. That could take some time. I’ve seen kangaroos running with their guts spilling out.... I’m not proud of what I’ve done; I just wanted to tell you that the kangaroo industry is lying.”

Some animals are still alive when their leg is sliced open, a hook is inserted through the gash and they are hauled up onto the truck. Their throat/chest is then slit. The shooter stops from time to time and guts the kangaroos, the head, limbs and tail are chopped off and discarded. The skin is left on until the dead animal reaches the processing works (32). The carcasses are supposed to be delivered to a chiller, usually at a local town depot before high temperatures help further rotting. They are then taken to a processing plant where skins are pulled off and taken to a tannery to make leather and the carcasses butchered for meat. What is left of Australia’s national emblem goes to make fertiliser.

Even for an experienced shooter, the small kangaroo head is a difficult target, especially at night with the dazzle of spotlights distorting vision. In 1985 the Australian RSPCA carried out a survey into the kangaroo industry, paid for by government. The RSPCA warn that their results were distorted because “the shooters volunteering information were considered the cleanest in the industry”. Even so, they found that “at least 15 per cent of kangaroos killed commercially die inhumanely”. They say the true figure is much higher.

The Australian RSPCA said in 1997:

“The RSPCA opposes the killing of kangaroos for economic purposes...the incidence of cruelty is too high to be justified....we are campaigning against the quota system and the industry it sustains.” (20)

Amazingly, the kangaroo industry often states that the RSPCA supports the commercial kill. In 1999, Peter Barber, Director of the Victorian State RSPCA put the record straight. He said:

“In its 1985 report, the RSPCA voiced its concern over the high incidence of inhumane kills. For some self-promoting reason several people have interpreted the report as an endorsement of the kangaroo industry. This is completely untrue, in fact, absurd.

“The RSPCA has steadfastly opposed the quota system and the killing of kangaroos for economic purposes. The industry has not identified that any improvements have been made since the RSPCA report was written and, in any case, as with other self-regulated industries, proper regulation and standards cannot be guaranteed.” (22)

If a shooter is a poor shot it simply means he uses a few extra rounds of ammunition, using living animals for target practice, many of which will limp off into the bush to die a painful death. In Britain, the use of shot guns with a wide spread of shot have been consistently decried as an undesirable way of killing foxes by the hunting lobby. Yet in Australia, the single shot of a rifle is portrayed as a humane and infallible method of killing kangaroos.

One thing is certain, such a method of killing farmed animals and their young carried out under similar conditions would not be tolerated in the UK and would be seen as what it is - an animal welfare outrage.

Video footage filmed by IFAW Australia shows a middle-aged man, an ‘experienced’ unlicensed but commercial killer, and his son of about 10 years old, killing kangaroos and joeys. It is evidence of just one night’s slaughter and contains numerous instances of blatant cruelty:

1. The majority of kangaroos shot are hit in the throat and do not die instantly.
2. The child stands on the face of a wounded, conscious kangaroo as the shooter cuts into its leg in order to place a hook through it.
3. A kangaroo is shot in the throat, hung onto the truck by a hind leg and the truck is driven away with the animal still gasping for breath.
4. A joey is pulled out of the pouch of his dying mother. The shooter comments: “You'd better turn the camera off,” as he stamps on the baby’s head. The child then also casually twists his foot on its head but the joey is still alive and moaning after these crude attempts to kill it.
6. The shooter allows a pouched young to escape into the bush where it will certainly die.
7. The shooter boasts about shooting pelicans, a protected species of wallaby and tries to shoot at a moving fox. And so it continues....



IFAW footage showed an ‘experienced’ unlicensed but commercial killer, and his son of about 10 years old, killing kangaroos and joeys. The film contained numerous instances of blatant cruelty

(For a copy of the footage, contact Viva!.)

The shooters may work through most of the night. If the killing is for skin only, often the case in Queensland, the shooters stop from time to time to skin the animals, leaving the carcass. He may kill over 100 kangaroos per night. In NSW and WA, shooting only for skins is illegal and the number of kangaroos slaughtered in one night is limited by what the truck can carry, usually 50 (32).

Why Are Kangaroos Killed?

Australian wildlife, including kangaroos, is under serious threat from Australian Government policy, which now states:

“Australian native wildlife is a renewable resource. If managed in an ecologically sustainable manner, wildlife

can provide a perpetual source of economic benefits for all Australians.”

Where farmers believe (mistakenly) that they are in competition with the wildlife on ‘their’ land, the Government always favours the landowner. Whatever animal is involved, it is destroyed.

Two main reasons have been given to Viva! by the industry for killing kangaroos. These are:

1. Kangaroos are a major wheat crop pest
2. Kangaroos compete with sheep/cattle for resources

It is also said that kangaroos breed out of control (see also Population Matters on page 19) and that artificial watering points have affected the distribution of kangaroos.

These statements are untrue and do not justify the largest wildlife massacre this planet has ever seen. Let’s look at each statement in turn.

1. Kangaroos Are Not ‘Wheat Pests’

“Kangaroos no longer exist in wheat areas as they have long since been killed off.” (Australian Wildlife Protection Council). (23)

A four year study of Grey Kangaroos in Western Australia by CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation) found that 95 per cent of wheat crops are never visited by kangaroos. (2) Also few kangaroos wander more than 400 metres from their home range in the bush. The study found that kangaroos have virtually no impact on the country’s crops, despite claims by farmers that they are a major crop pest and further the study recommended that farmers who have natural bush land on their property encourage its growth to help keep the kangaroos fed.

Dr Graham Arnold, former senior principle research scientist, CSIRO, Division of Wildlife and Ecology, who studied the impact of kangaroos on croplands, stated in 1998:

“Most kangaroos did not like to eat farm crops and would only thrive if given access to their natural foods.....Unless the community manages remnant vegetation to minimise degradation and enhance the regeneration of native plants, kangaroos and some other native species will disappear from much of Western Australia over the next 100 years.”

He also said:

“All the land cleared for farming in Western Australia was habitat for one or more species of kangaroos, wallabies and their relatives. Today, five species are extinct throughout the wheatbelt and four species are found only in a few locations.” (22)

Furthermore, a study of the kangaroo killing zones quickly reveals that kangaroos are largely commercially shot in areas where they are NOT seen as a problem to crop growers. Instead, commercial killing takes place in

regions of extensive grazing. These areas produce almost no crops and account for only 10 per cent of Australia's meat production (22). Dr Arnold states:

"Due to the marginal nature of these areas [where kangaroos are killed commercially for meat and skin], stocking rates of [sheep or cattle] are traditionally very low. Properties need to be enormous. Indeed, publicity given to property owners in these areas in the outback show that the kangaroo, even if in large numbers, could only be placed very low on a long list of environmental and economic factors effecting their livelihood."

Yet farmers and the Australian Government regularly refer to kangaroos as pests. Dr Arnold responds:

"Pests is an emotive word. It conjures up visions of animals destroying crops. I can think of no situations where this is likely to be true for kangaroos." (22)

2. Kangaroos Do Not Compete With Sheep and Cattle

The second main reason given for slaughtering kangaroos is that they compete for resources with cattle and sheep. A six year study by Dr Steven McLeod at the University of New South Wales (3) is the most comprehensive of its type and thoroughly examines whether the presence of Red Kangaroos negatively impacts on sheep. When I gave interviews in Australia on the kangaroo trade, the industry's, farmers, politicians and some journalists most favourite excuse for the killing was that kangaroos would eat sheep out of house and home if left to their own devices. According to Dr McLeod some studies previous to his have suggested that kangaroos and sheep compete for food, but none have been conclusive. His study is the first to examine this hypothesis properly. In a nutshell, he finds that:

"There was no evidence of a competitive effect of red kangaroos on sheep." (3)

This was true even in drought conditions. In the winter of 1991 when the study region was officially declared as drought stricken by the Government of NSW, the study found no competition for food between sheep and Red Kangaroos. The study concluded that Red Kangaroos do not effect the body mass, wool growth, reproductive output of sheep or the growth and survivorship of lambs. In fact, it was found that Red Kangaroos "consistently avoid areas used by sheep" and that sheep have a negative impact on kangaroos!

Further, Ingrid White who was awarded the Australian Post-Graduate Award for her PhD, started field research for her thesis, Spatio-temporal interaction of mammalian herbivores in the arid zone, in 1994 at UNSW Arid Zone Research Station Fowlers gap, Broken Hill. She states:

"Like several other researchers before me, working in the same study area located on a commercial sheep station in the outback of New South Wales and working under real conditions, in real paddocks and with real stocking rates, I found little evidence for detrimental effects of kangaroo on the domestic sheep or vegetation. And this, despite the kangaroos not having been culled as a 'pest' species for more than 30 years - and the kangaroos equalling or surpassing the numbers of sheep stocked on the station." (22)

Grigg – the Main Advocate of Kangaroo Killing – Admits Kangaroos Do Not Compete with Sheep

If there was any doubt left that kangaroos are pests and compete with sheep, it was finally laid to rest by

Gordon Grigg, the man who first encouraged the slaughter with his kangaroo killers' bible, *The Commercial Harvesting of Kangaroos in Australia*. It had previously been claimed that one kangaroo equalled one sheep in its grazing demands, forgetting to add that at about 100 million, the actual number of sheep far outstrips even the most ambitious estimate for kangaroos.

Grigg finally did some research and discovered that one sheep equalled almost five kangaroos - so estimates of their grazing pressure had been 500 per cent out and the excuse for killing kangaroos was therefore also 500 per cent out. Unsurprisingly he concluded: "The hope of getting a significant improvement in wool production by pest control of kangaroos is probably doomed to failure." (70)

If you were naive you might think that this demolished the last excuse of the industry and killing would be ended. Governments are much more duplicitous than this, particularly when a few votes are at risk in remote rural areas. They simply removed the need to prove damage mitigation at all – in other words, anyone can now kill kangaroos simply because they're there.

3. Kangaroo Distribution is Not Related to AWP

Another excuse for the killing related to stock (artificial) watering points (AWP) and the argument that this unnatural water supply had caused kangaroo numbers to explode, causing serious overgrazing.

No sooner was the claim established than a study in Sturt National Park (Strategic Management of AWP for Biodiversity, Conservation and Nature Based Tourism) destroyed it. It reveals that kangaroo distribution is not related to 'water-focused grazing patterns' but is mainly determined by the best grazing and resting spots. Researcher Rebecca Montague-Drake (UNSW, Sydney) showed that because kangaroos prefer to drink at specific times of day, they may be seen in high densities around watering holes, but the animals quickly disperse to the best grazing or resting places. She states: "Current lack of vegetation around AWP can be more correctly attributed to sheep grazing pressure, even 20 years after sheep have been removed, than to kangaroo grazing pressure." (68)

4. Kangaroos Do Not 'Breed Out of Control!'

Research on Red Kangaroos by Amanda Bilton and David Croft (University of New South Wales) was even more disturbing when it revealed that far from numbers booming, few joeys survive (69). The average number of young weaned in a lifetime is only 3.7 (41 per cent less than their potential). Half the females weaned less offspring than expected and a quarter left no offspring at all. Only about seven per cent reach adulthood each year and, even worse, Red Kangaroos are being slaughtered three times faster than they can breed. Without showing concern, other scientists stated at a conference in July 2001 that the average age of red males, who can live for more than 20 years, has collapsed from 15 to just two years old, caused by the industry's practice of targeting the largest animals.

Clearly, the reality is the opposite to that which the meat industry would have us believe. And the whole basis upon which the kangaroo massacre has gained public tolerance in Australia is false.

Population Matters

Counting Kangaroos

Red, Eastern and Western Grey kangaroos are counted from the air in certain zones (and sometimes from the ground eg Eastern Greys). This methodology has been criticised for many years for its inaccuracy. Correction factors are used to guess the true population levels. Put simply, when one kangaroo is spotted, you multiply by 4.8 or a number nominated to compensate for those kangaroos that can't be seen. Every state uses different correction factors and they keep changing - sometimes more than doubling! The kangaroo populations can double overnight according to this counting method - a method obviously deeply flawed.

In 1998, Tony Bigwood, director of Wildlife Populations Environment Australia, issued a directive to the NSW NPWS Kangaroo program manager, Joshua Gilroy that new correction factors would apply. He admitted that Grey Kangaroos could not be distinguished from the air and recommended that the correction factor be lifted from 2.2 to 4.8.

Pat O'Brien, Wildlife Protection Association of Australia, believes the Australian Government fudges the figures in favour of the kangaroo industry. He states that before 2001, Government agencies estimated a kangaroo population of 25 million; by 2002 it would be impossible for the population to more than double.

Population Control?

The kangaroo meat industry contradicts itself in its claims over why kangaroos are killed. On the one hand they state they the animals need to be killed to keep their numbers in check. On the other, they claim that killing kangaroos conserves the species and increases numbers. They cannot have it both ways!

There is no evidence to show that kangaroos are commercially killed for meat and skin today as a method of population control. (See Quotas - a Cynical PR Exercise on page 25.)

This claim of 'population control' becomes particularly hollow when you realise that the kangaroos are not 'culled'. A genuine cull aims to reduce the size of a population and involves killing whole family groups. It may involve killing the old, sick, diseased and lame animals. In the case of the commercial kangaroo slaughter - only the largest and fittest animals are shot and usually more males are killed (because they are bigger); leaving young females to breed rapidly. The commercial killing industry is not an organised cull working with the best interests of the kangaroo at its heart!

The late Dr Peter Rawlinson, zoologist at La Trobe University, Melbourne, said:

"Kangaroo culling programs completely disregard the age and sex structure of herds, and for this reason cannot be taken seriously.... Professional hunters shoot mainly large adult males, because these animals earn them the most money."

The estimates of the population sizes of the most commonly killed species of kangaroo vary enormously. In 1983 Barry Cohen, then minister for the environment, Australia stated that there were 21 million kangaroos; in the same year the National Farmers Federation claimed there were 30 million!

In 1998 the Australian High Commission in London stated that there were over 50 million kangaroos. This is a ludicrous figure and not supported by Australia's Federal Department of the Environment which quoted a total of 19 million animals in the same year. The industry estimated that there were 27 million animals in an interview with myself in 1998. In 2001 they stated that there are 35 or 50 million animals (27); 40 million (28) and 50 million (26)! In 2000 the Government estimated 25 million, in 2002 they more than doubled the figure to 58 million - making it very difficult to trust their guesstimates. It is in the killers interests to quote a high number - but if 25, 35 or 60 million were accurate; this is not a high number for a landmass the size of Australia; nor is it a large number when you consider in the region of 10 million kangaroos were killed in 2000. (Includes commercial, non-commercial and illegal shootings, joey deaths due to mothers being shot and road kills.)

Most importantly of all, what matters is not the total number of kangaroos so much as whether they are an integral, valuable and essential part of their environment or whether they are destroying it. As seen later - scientific evidence shows that the rapid destruction of Australia's environment is not being caused by kangaroos!

In any event, averaging the staggeringly variable estimates of kangaroo population sizes over the past 30 years, shows that the population has not increased and until recently has remained fairly constant, except during severe droughts (eg in 1982-83 it dropped to only 11 million). However, there are worrying signs of populations falling today. For example, in New South Wales (NSW) the percentage of all species of kangaroos killed has increased over the last decade. 19 per cent of Eastern Greys are shot and 21 per cent of Western Greys (risen from 14 per cent in the 1980s). Also, in 1996 the NSW kill was the highest on record, whilst the population was the lowest for 11 years (21).

Due to the steady increase in the size of the annual massacre and the decrease in habitat, numbers are set to fall nationwide.

The population estimates above are for the main species of kangaroos killed; there are many other macropod species which are endangered or vulnerable. Furthermore, kangaroo expert Dr John Auty BVSc claims that the current population size of the main species today is far less than the numbers which existed when the Europeans first settled in Australia. In other words, the industry's portrayal of the kangaroo being in 'plague proportions' is a convenient but false assertion.

Populations Crash from 2000-2005

According to the Australian Government's Sustainable Wildlife Industries, Department of the Environment and Heritage the numbers of Red Kangaroo, Eastern Grey and Wallaroo (Euro) have dropped dramatically from 2000 to 2005.

Despite constant warnings from animal welfare groups that kangaroos were under severe pressure from drought and commercial killing, the Australian Government's officially-sanctioned slaughter for meat and skin exports has continued unabated. The result is that populations of the main target species, the Eastern Grey Kangaroo, have crashed by 63 per cent in just four years. Red kangaroo numbers have collapsed by 55 per cent and Wallaroos (Euros) by over 50 per cent. The species with the smallest drop is the Western Grey, the least abundant of all the targeted species, which is down about 23 per cent.

Red Kangaroo numbers have fallen from 17.4 million to under eight million, Eastern Greys have dropped from nearly 30 million to under 11 million and Wallaroos are down from nearly seven million to just over three million, and there are just over two and a half million Western Greys left. In real terms it means that there are almost 33 million kangaroos fewer in the areas used for commercial hunting than just four years ago. Despite this, a further 3.8 million animals have been earmarked for killing in 2006, a drop of only a hundred thousand on 2005. This figure takes no account of the hundreds of thousands of baby Joeys, who are either left to die from starvation or are removed from their dead mother's pouches and are clubbed to death with iron pipes.

National Kangaroo Population Estimates for Commercial Harvested Areas

Population estimates are based on aerial and ground surveys and are for the areas within Australia where commercial harvesting occurs.

Year	Macropus rufus (Red Kangaroo)	M. giganteus (Eastern Grey)	M. fuliginosus (Western Grey)	M. robustus (Euro/Wallaroo)	Total
1995	11,726,559	16,356,682	4,276,438	1,712,737	34,072,417
1996	10,261,520	14,918,531	3,892,947	1,787,615	30,860,613
1997	9,785,645	11,719,515	3,617,499	1,724,952	26,847,611
1998	14,621,757	15,194,812	3,506,301	3,671,879	36,994,749
1999	14,183,664	16,526,433	3,746,068	6,257,559	40,713,724
2000	17,906,485	23,155,494	3,393,373	6,838,750	51,294,102
2001	17,434,513	29,721,271	3,424,992	6,849,250	57,430,026
2002	13,633,816	23,383,249	3,764,289	3,064,178	43,845,532
2003	8,727,856	13,875,828	2,610,931	2,999,906	28,214,521
2004	7,987,250	11,111,840	3,019,320	3,196,511	25,314,921
2005	7,753,247	10,876,498	2,625,708	3,380,838	24,636,291

Source: Sustainable Wildlife Industries, Department of the Environment and Heritage, Canberra, Australia, 2005

Survival of the Unfittest

Dr Ian Gunn, BVSc, FACVS, project director at the Animal Gene Storage Resource Centre of Australia, Institute of Reproduction and Development, Monash Medical Centre, was asked by the kangaroo industry in 1997 to approve a reduction in the official weight of kangaroos being commercially killed. This request by the industry is of great concern to Viva! as it means that there are insufficient numbers of kangaroos meeting the current weight.

Dr Gunn refused to support the request by the kangaroo industry and stated in July 1997:

"..the current situation will ultimately reduce the mature weights and sizes of future generations and could lead to a decrease in the ability of the population to survive.

"The ability to accept adhoc decisions and to the development of future policy without rational and valid

facts, seems to be a continual feature of this industry. Without a national plan to preserve the species and the environment, it is totally inappropriate to allow the continual mass slaughter on the basis of the economic viability of those in the industry." (4)

"...the continued slaughter of kangaroos has the potential to cause the extinction of a number of remaining species."

In 1999, Dr Gunn explained that the continued culling may cause extinctions for three reasons (22):

1. The indiscriminate killing - ie the elimination of the largest, healthiest kangaroos.
2. The unreliable and largely estimated kangaroo population figures that the Government and industry use to justify the extent of their kill.
3. The relocation of species habitats. Kangaroos are being forced into areas that are very sensitive to climatic changes and increased grazing pressures as eg their habitat has been destroyed and they have been killed in increasing numbers.

Dr Gunn stated in 1999 that:

"The evidence is indisputable and, if left to continue, has the potential to result in reduced genetic variability, lower reproductive efficiency and a radical reduction in the population density below sustainable levels in certain regions of the country when associated with habitat destruction or seasonal conditions such as droughts."

He further states that Australia has the worst wildlife record in the world. Since the settlement of Europeans 210 years ago, 18 species of mammals have become extinct (half of all the world's loss of mammals in the same time), another 45 are threatened with extinction. Six species of macropods have become extinct (and a further four are extinct on the mainland), seven are classed as endangered and 10 as vulnerable. Only nine species are considered abundant however these are killed annually (22).

The basis of Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection is that natural factors kill the less fit individuals in all wildlife species and so only the fittest survive to reproduce. This is survival of the fittest and is an essential process for a species to remain healthy and genetically viable.

The annual kangaroo massacre undermines the process of natural selection. The larger animals are always targeted as they provide more meat and skin. This means that although a population will try to breed quickly to regain numbers, the less fit individuals reproduce, leading to a genetically inferior population. This situation is worsened in severe drought conditions when, on top of the millions of kangaroos that die naturally, the kangaroo industry wipes out the very individuals who are able to survive the extreme conditions.

This unnatural process which flies in the face of nature, leads to populations of kangaroos becoming less and less suited to the harsh environments which they face.

The Australian Wildlife Protection Council told Viva!:

“Defying natural selection and acting to ensure the artificial process of always killing the biggest and best out of a mob is a threat to the future survival of the species because even if there is an increase in populations, the animals are not fit and the populations are unstable.

“Taking the biggest Red Kangaroos for the skin trade and the young one to two year old Red Kangaroos for human consumption puts insupportable pressure on the Red Kangaroo. An up to 80 per cent male bias in the kill leaves weaker, unfit, unstable, unhealthy populations to breed next year. Is this really supposed to be ‘good management?!’”

Further, the killing destroys the social order of a mob. “When a shooter enters the structured society of a mob of kangaroos, he destroys a complex system by killing the alpha male, his immediate rivals, and the older females, who are the educators of the group. This selective hunting results in females mating with young males and the loss of the inherited genetic strength of the mob.” (22)

As Peter Preuss of the National Kangaroo Campaign, Australia states:

“This fundamental ecological implication of the commercial kangaroo industry should be enough for commercial killing to be seen as a threatening process in the long term.” (6)

Further Dr David Croft, School of Biological Sciences, University of New South Wales adds to this view. He says that reproductive success in kangaroos is a complex interaction between size, age and condition of males and females - and “very few individuals enjoy high success, most miss out”. (40)

“Amongst males, the largest and fittest fight their way to dominion over mating rights to most of the females in their local population. To achieve this status they have grown for around 10 years and on average, survived at least one drought. Where the opportunity arises, females will selectively seek out and mate with these alpha males, and attempt to thwart often successfully, the mating attempts of lesser males. Females advertise their oestrus widely...with the consequence of attracting a bevy of competing male suitors, amongst which a ‘superior’ mate will emerge.

“Relatively few unharvested males live long enough to challenge for alpha status.” For example, studies in Queensland show that only 20 per cent of male Red Kangaroos reach four to nine years and yet almost 60 per cent of males are commercially shot in this age group (41). Croft points out: “If we then impose an artificial selective pressure through the current regime of male-biased ‘top-down’ culling, fewer still will survive and the result is a severe disruption to the natural social organisation, changes to population dynamics and the introduction of unnatural selective forces.”

Breeding males are becoming smaller and younger and Croft says those that would not normally breed are doing so. “There is a strong selection for smaller body size. We lose genotypes that have been strongly selected by the environment because survival to an old age is a matter of good foraging skills, disease resistance, competitive abilities and chance,” says Croft. There is sound scientific evidence to show that female

kangaroos choose 'good genes' in potential partners. The kangaroo industry argues that killing kangaroos does not destroy 'good genes' because killing 15-20 per cent of the population should leave plenty of copies of 'good genes' in the population. Croft refutes this as: "This would be true if the cull selected targets at random but clearly this is not the case. The cull may effectively take close to 100 per cent of large males". He says this should "prompt alarm".

Other countries indicate how commercial killing selects against characteristics developed for survival. In Sri Lanka the strong selection pressure from killing elephants for ivory has increased the proportion of tuskless individuals in the wild populations. Kurt et al (1995) report a very high proportion – 93 per cent - of tuskless subadult and adult bull elephants, yet this trait is rare in Asian elephants. Tusked elephants are preferred as mates because they have better foraging skills and can defend themselves and their family against predators, but there are now few to find (42).

The above shows that the Australian Government's claim that slaughtering kangaroos for meat "saves millions of kangaroos from dying a slow death due to Australia's frequent droughts" to be grossly misleading as the weakest kangaroos are left to survive by the targeted killing.

Doug Reilly shares this view. He is one of Australia's most respected and knowledgeable kangaroo experts. He runs a sanctuary for orphaned kangaroos at Chinaman Creek Environmental Research Station, Winnowie Conservation Park, South Australia. He states: "The cull is really a large wild-harvest or farming of wild populations. The real danger in this practice has been a drastic change in the social and biological make-up of these wild populations.

"In any wild animal if you disrupt in a short period of time the normal reproduction processes that have evolved over tens of thousands of years you are in danger of putting the species at risk. Precedents have been set in other parts of the world where large populations of a species (wolves, seals, bison etc) have faced extinction after widespread and destructive 'culling' programs. Many of these species suffered exotic bacteria and viruses when their population contained a critical and unsustainable gene pool." (44)

The kangaroo industry is responsible for potentially putting the kangaroo at risk. Dr Ian Gunn reiterates: "The evidence is indisputable. A moratorium on the culling of all macropods is urgently needed."

Further Contradictions of the Kangaroo Industry

Michael Archer, director of the Australian Museum, Sydney, is a driving force behind killing kangaroos on the basis of it helping wildlife! This ill-conceived plan is aptly called FATE (The Future of Australia's Terrestrial Ecosystems). Politician Richard Jones (former member of the New South Wales legislative council), criticises FATE "... as it does indeed represent the ultimate fate of Australia's fauna and flora - for it proposes what is essentially their privatisation".

Jones states that the commercialisation of wildlife means "the possible loss of our national symbol and the continuing degradation of ecosystems with four wheel drives carving up our fragile soils of rangelands in their nightly search for a kill. With the legal commercial kill tripling in the last 10 years and with the biggest

kangaroos the prime target, there can be little doubt that the gene pool is weakening. Recent outbreaks of disease may be an indication of this." (34)

Amazingly, Archer argues that unless the kangaroo is valued as an economic resource: "It is at risk of extinction through general disinterest, destruction of its habitat and predator activity." (18)

The Government backs Archer and yet it states that the kangaroo is certainly not at risk from extinction - in fact it is in plague proportions. Politician Mr Slack-Smith declared that there are "at least 50 million of the four most common kangaroo species. As a result it is essential to protect the environment and to reduce the impact of kangaroo populations on farming and grazing enterprises. Fortunately, every State in Australia has managed to establish effective culling programs and Australia is beginning to benefit from the increasing popularity of kangaroo products domestically and overseas." (26)

Archer claims that large-scale farming of non-Australian species such as sheep and cattle is damaging the vast and marginal rangelands and that they should be 'downsized' (one point on which we agree!). Even John Kelly of the Kangaroo Industry Association agrees in one breath, saying that killing kangaroos instead of sheep and cattle "makes enormous environmental wisdom" (26). In the next, his Association states that the industry "plays an important role" in controlling kangaroos. "The kangaroo population would be approximately 30 per cent higher if the industry did not exist. (Caughley 1987) This would threaten the stability of the region and potentially result in extensive desertification." (Note the native kangaroos do not cause desertification - hardhoofed cattle and sheep do.)

Many other advocates of the kangaroo industry also do not support Archer's view, stating that the kangaroos should be killed so that they do not harm cattle and sheep farmers! They argue that it is the kangaroos, not their own farming practices, that destroy the environment. (See section *Why are Kangaroos Killed?* for information on why this argument is false.)

An analysis of the arguments put forward by the industry and Government quickly exposes that they frequently contradict themselves and, to put it mildly, manipulate the facts.

Quotas - A Cynical PR Exercise

Quotas were introduced in 1975 (32). Each year the federal minister for the environment announces the annual kill quotas. These are set State by State and species by species.

As the National Kangaroo Campaign in Australia state, it is assumed that the quotas reflect the actual numbers of kangaroos and determine the level of killing.

However, if this were the case, you would expect sizeable fluctuations in State quotas to accommodate the rise and fall in kangaroo numbers. The general trend has been a steady increase in State kills since the 1970s. Even in 1982 to 83, during a severe drought which caused kangaroo numbers to drop to 11 million; the kangaroo quotas were set at more than three million annually.

The National Kangaroo Campaign state:

“An examination of quotas together with the actual number of kangaroos killed exposes the quota system to be little more than a PR exercise. The number of species killed often exceeds the set quota. When this occurs, the following year’s quota is simply increased to accommodate the overkill in that state.”

The RSPCA of Australia totally opposes the setting of quotas and further opposes the commercial kangaroo industry because of the inherent cruelty involved in the killing.

Kangaroos Are Killed for Money, Not Love...

It is interesting that outlets that sell kangaroo meat, and the industry, desperately try to defend the kangaroo massacre, rather than admit that these wild animals are killed purely for money. Even State Governments in Australia concede that the huge numbers killed now has nothing to do with damage mitigation or population control; it is simply a profit making exercise.

In 1984 the Queensland Government added the following statement to its kangaroo management programme:

“It is important to recognise that while the kangaroo industry was originally a response to the past problem caused by these animals, it has now come to exist in its own right as the user of a renewable natural resource and thus serves its own interests.”

Of course referring to living, feeling creatures as ‘renewable resources’ is meant to soften the reality of what it really means - the wholesale slaughter of the planet’s wildlife.

The Queensland admission that commercial killing is NOT a tool for management has been extended to other states. The Tasmania, New South Wales and Western Australian Governments all openly promote the commercial species of kangaroo and wallaby as a ‘renewable resource’ which should be shot regardless of whether the animals are perceived to cause damage or not.

The Australian Wildlife Protection Council says:

“Kangaroos are killed for profit rather than in response to damage mitigation. The huge increase in the numbers killed since the 1970s has ensured profits but conflicts with the traditional objectives for which the kangaroo industry has gained public tolerance.

“Most Australians are not aware of this recent change in official policy which erodes the status of the kangaroo to that of a mere commodity.”

Kangaroos and the Environment

One of the most disingenuous statements the sellers of kangaroo meat make is that the commercial killing of kangaroos ‘protects the environment’.

The kangaroo industry is environmentally unfriendly! Night after night shooters criss cross the fragile outback terrain, causing erosion, trampling the native vegetation and disturbing (crushing and sometimes killing) the small ground dwelling native species (many of which are endangered). They kill and gut millions of kangaroos, leaving their remains to feed feral animals, thus further skewing the ecology of the outback.

When I was in Australia in March 1998, I had a TV debate with John Kelly, director of a possum abattoir in Tasmania and spokesperson for the kangaroo industry. He argued that kangaroos needed to be killed to protect the environment and that kangaroos were incapable of controlling their own numbers. (In fact, female Red Kangaroos stop reproducing (anoestrus) during prolonged poor conditions.) He spoke of the kangaroos as if they were some alien species destroying everything in their path. (See section Further Contradictions from the Kangaroo Industry on page 24.) I pointed out that the truth was the opposite - as Australian ecologist Bryan Walters says: "The kangaroo does not destroy Australia's environment - it is an integral part of that environment and lives in harmony with it."

Of course the kangaroo is the original resident of Australia. They are unique to Australia and are perfectly adapted to live within that magnificent country's harsh climate and sensitive environment. The earliest ancestors of kangaroos evolved about 50 millions years ago; by about 25 million years ago the evolution of the macropoids was well under way and by four to five million years ago the first species clearly related to the modern Grey Kangaroos and Wallaroos appeared. The Red Kangaroo is the most recently evolved kangaroo. Its fossil record goes back up to two million years ago and its evolution coincides with the spread of the deserts in Australia. (7) The Aborigines entered Australia 40 to 60,000 years ago; the Europeans 210 years ago. The environment of Australia has been decimated over the past 150 years. One guess as to which species is to blame.

Kangaroo - the Scapegoat for Land Mismanagement

The federal Government's Environment Australia (which implements legislation designed to ensure that kangaroos are killed and exported) aggressively supports the kangaroo industry. It published a revised report, *The Commercial Harvesting of Kangaroos in Australia* in April 1999. It is supposedly a justification of the massacre - however, it is nothing of the sort. As David Nicholls, formerly a full time commercial kangaroo shooter, states: "Nowhere in its 134 pages does it state that kangaroos are a significant and widespread problem other than a perceived one to the grazing community. It does however, on many occasions point out that the unsustainable use of land by sheep and cattle producers is a real problem."

Primary Industries, a Government body, equate two kangaroos to one sheep. In other words, the 130 million sheep in Australia is equivalent to 260 million kangaroos! Yet - as already seen, the estimate of the kangaroo population is, according to Environment Australia, 25 to 35 million (29).

As Nicholls states:

"For kangaroo 'culling' to be necessary, scientific method requires that significant, widespread and continual damage to rangelands and infrastructure is actually happening. IT IS NOT and no such inkling of evidence exists and because of the proportionally smaller number of kangaroos than stock, for it to exist, would mean

that kangaroos would have to be far greater destroyers per capita than introduced stock." (33)

Kangaroos, as already seen, have evolved to suit Australia's environment - with soft feet, requiring less water than livestock, no need to grow wool or fat and are efficient travellers that do not compete for resources with sheep (see Kangaroos are Killed for Money, not Love...). The Australian Government tries to portray the kangaroo as a pest - Nicholls states: "Kangaroos have never been pests and they are not now." They are vilified when it is the sheep and cattle that are ruining sensitive environment.

The Europeans who first invaded Australia soon found that it was not a trouble-free land. By 1853 John Robertson of south-western Victoria wrote:

"...the few sheep made little impression on the face of the country for three or four years...then plants began to disappear...the clay hills are slipping in all directions...springs of salt water are bursting out in every hollow...when rain falls it runs off the hard ground into the creeks and is carrying earth, trees and all before it."

As the Australian Wildlife Protection Council says:

"By the 1850s the kangaroo had become a scapegoat for land mismanagement. It was seen as one more problem facing man on the land. But, unlike many other environmental and economic problems facing these folk, the kangaroo could be dealt with by the age old expedient method of extermination."

The kangaroo has not destroyed Australia's environment; the white human settlers have raped the land by introducing heavy, hard hoofed domestic animals such as cattle and sheep. Australia's soils are far thinner than those in Europe and tree clearance

and livestock have taken a heavy toll. Land degradation is now Australia's "most pressing environmental problem" (11). Despite the enormous damage done by these species, livestock numbers are still high - as shown here:

Year	Cattle	Sheep
1861	4 million	20 million
1921	13.5 million	82 million
1961	17 million	152.5 million
1990	23 million	170 million
2000	27 million	130 million
2005	27.5 million	101 million

Source: Livestock and Livestock Products, Australia; Australian Bureau of Statistics

Estimates of degraded land due to pastoralism range from 1.85 to 2.18 million km² (8,9). The situation is

particularly serious in New South Wales where 100 per cent of the rangelands are degraded. Considering that the rangelands have only been used for pastoralism for 100-150 years, this data is frightening. Much of the badly degraded land will turn to desert unless urgent action is taken (8).

As Greenpeace International surmise:

"The farming lobby continues to use kangaroos and wallabies as an excuse for diminishing margins between farm costs and returns.....in fact kangaroos are not a significant factor in the reduction of farm productivity

nor indeed do they threaten agricultural interests." (10)

Currently, farmers cannot blame kangaroos for their misfortunes - because they are celebrating an upturn in profits. *The Age* reported on 7 April 2001 a farmer saying: "Everything has jelled together for this season. The wool market is good, so is the beef, the lamb and the oats...I haven't seen anything like it in my time. It's unbelievable."

And *The Australian* reported on 17 April 2001 that investors are rushing into the rural services and that 'cattle and wool prices are booming.....[there is] a kind of renaissance in Australia's rural sector'.

Despite the fact that the kangaroo does not compete with livestock for food, the kangaroo has been labelled a pest by farmers which gives them a good excuse to make money from killing them. The Government has a greater imperative to placate the farming lobby than protect wildlife because of its political leverage. This is because historically, Australia's economic base was built through the agricultural and pastoral sectors. However, since the 1950s other sectors in the economy have become the dominant players. The rural sector now accounts for only 4 per cent of Australia's gross domestic product.

Despite its minimal contribution, the rural sector still has considerable political power, as the primary support-base for conservative governments and as a critical force in marginal seats for labour governments. Neither have wanted to jeopardise its constituency for wildlife.

Currently the push from the Australian Government is to commercialise wildlife - plugging the self evident lie that killing kangaroos protects them! The Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales, the umbrella organisation for more than 100 conservation, environmental protection and scientific societies, has called on the Government to "refrain from legislating or otherwise enabling the commercialisation and consumptive use of certain types of wild fauna (including kangaroos and all other mammals)". It also opposes the farming of native animals and has called for a ban on the export of all kangaroo and wallaby products. The NCC does not believe the kangaroo industry - whether shooting animals in the wild or farming wildlife - to be ecologically sustainable (22).

Kangaroo Farming

So serious are the problems of land degradation that the federal Government announced that the 1990s is the 'decade of landcare' - what a miserable failure that has been! The kangaroo industry has taken advantage of the increasing public concern over land destruction, arguing that soft footed kangaroos do not destroy the sensitive landscape and so kangaroo farming should replace sheep and cattle.

(This has caused disagreement amongst farmers as many will not publicly admit the damage they have done to the environment and others believe kangaroo farming to be unviable.)

This 'farm the wildlife' argument is appealing to some who would like to see introduced species removed from the arid and semi-arid zones. Even some 'conservationists', usually concerned about wildlife exploitation, are prepared to sacrifice the wild status of kangaroos in the belief that it is a better option than continued land destruction.

But kangaroo farming is not the answer to protecting the environment.

All it will lead to is the kangaroo industry shooting yet more wildlife and ecosystems being further destroyed. Valuing animals in purely economic terms ignores their intrinsic worth. It ignores their individuality and right to well being. It also ignores their ecological worth. It is this attitude that has led to one-third of the world's animal genetic resources now being at risk.

Other species, when used as 'renewable resources', have declined or become extinct. Even the fishing industry, with all its management programmes, quotas and massive subsidies - and knowledge of the damage it is causing by over exploitation, has still reached crisis point, with half of the world's main fishing grounds facing environmental collapse (12). Think of any wild animal which has had a price tag put on its head - cheetahs, whales, tigers, gorillas, chimpanzees, rhinos, seals, exotic birds, Toolache Wallaby (extinct) and the danger signs for the future of the kangaroo become clear.

The challenge is to save and preserve our remaining wildlife - not to farm it or blast it off the face of the planet.

Kangaroo Farming is Not Commercially Viable

Apart from the ecological and ethical debates, livestock farmers will not give up sheep and cattle in favour of kangaroos because it is not commercially viable.

As stated by the National Kangaroo Campaign (6), female kangaroos first breed in their second or third year, after which they produce a maximum of one offspring per year. Often mortality of pouch young is very high and drought may stop kangaroos breeding altogether. (Nature has worked out how to control populations, without the intervention of humans, over millions of years.) A young kangaroo is dependent on its mother until it is at least 14 months old and so cannot be sold as live young.

Compare this rate of reproduction with sheep. Sheep, unlike kangaroos, can produce twins. Lambs are independent of the mother within a few months and can be sold live. Sheep first breed after one year.

Kangaroos only produce two commercial products, meat and skin. Both are one-offs and require the animal to be killed. Sheep on the other hand are productive throughout their lives, producing at least one wool clip a year and meat and skin when they are slaughtered. Furthermore, whereas lambs produce 20kg of meat at three - six months old, kangaroos produce much less meat and are too small to kill before 18 months old. Only about 10 per cent of a kangaroo is useable for meat - a large red kangaroo of 60kg will only result in 6kg of prime cut meat. The rest will only be sold for pet meat or meat and bone meal.

In John Cameron's *Recovering Ground*, he concludes that the kangaroo industry could only ever provide 0.5 per cent of Australia's current meat production (13).

Furthermore, anyone trying to care for kangaroos will testify to the difficulties involved. Kangaroos suffer from eg post-capture myopathy, lumpy jaw (a fatal and highly contagious disease which is very hard to treat, meaning once contaminated an area must be free of kangaroos for at least three years), Coccidiosis and much more.

Post-capture myopathy is common and affects kangaroos after a chase or handling. Kangaroos suffer greatly from stress and an adrenalin rush can quickly kill the animal or may cause deterioration of muscles and a slower death.

The inability of kangaroos to be herded, yarded, or easily handled makes veterinary treatment and inspections difficult. It also makes farming the animal very risky.

Diseases in Kangaroos

As stated recently by agricultural scientists: "The recent series of diseases and mass mortalities in wild fauna, and emerging disease of wildlife in Australia have demonstrated the importance of wildlife disease as threats to biodiversity, human health, agriculture and trade." (36)

It is possible that the weakened genetic pool due to continually shooting the healthiest, strongest animals is responsible for increased disease levels in kangaroos. Some examples include:

- In October 1998 there was a major epidemic of an unknown disease in north-western New South Wales. The epidemic had a sudden onset, a short duration of about two weeks and high death rate (37). Most animals were found dead, some had difficulty rising and moved awkwardly. More mature kangaroos were affected than young. The epidemic had drastic effects on the population. Between 1998 and 1999 in the five affected areas, there was a 42 per cent decline in Red Kangaroos and a 46 per cent decline in Greys. In the main affected area, there was a startling 72 per cent reduction in Red Kangaroos. (This did not lead to a reduction in the quota for New South Wales for the number shot for meat.) Similar types of epidemics have also occurred in Queensland in 1990 and 1999.
- A widespread outbreak of blindness occurred in many thousands of kangaroos between April and July 1994, and between March and June 1995, in western New South Wales, Southern Australia, north western Victoria and later, in December 1995 to April 1996 in Western Australia. Western Greys were mainly affected but also Eastern Greys, Reds and Euros succumbed - all species that are commercially killed for meat (38, 39). It is believed that the outbreaks were caused by a virus (possibly the Wallal virus) spread by insects but the factors leading to the epidemic are unknown (38).

Parasites in Kangaroo Meat

Agricultural scientists identify a complete lack of "preparedness" to cope with wildlife diseases in Australia (36). Indeed the federal minister for agriculture, Warren Truss, issued a press release on 12 April 2001 stating that kangaroo meat does not represent any health risks! However he has still not backed up this statement with evidence.

Kangaroos harbour a vast range of parasites - many increase with stress and crowding.

Speare et al (14) neatly sums up the problem:

“Both species of Grey kangaroos may be infected with 30,000 nematodes from 20 different species...

“A forceful advertising campaign will be required to convince the consumer of the unique health benefits of *Pelecitus Roemeri* (large nematode worm which in southern Queensland infects 18 per cent of *M. gigantus*, 6 per cent of *M. rufus* and 22 per cent of *M. robustus*...)”

Dr David Obendorf, Wildlife Veterinary Pathologist, Australian member of the Scientific Advisory Board to the International Animal Health Body, Paris (Office des Internationale epizootes), with 20 years experience in the parasites and diseases of Australian fauna says:

“Kangaroos and wallabies can harbour a wide range of parasitic bacterial, fungal and viral diseases and most of the infections are inapparent (ie the animal looks normal). Even meat inspection procedures are unlikely to detect some infections unless gross lesions are apparent or samples are taken for testing.

“Worldwide, it is well recognised that so-called game meats are a source of infections for consumers, especially when care is not taken while eviscerating and handling the carcasses or when the meat is served undercooked or raw.

“In the last 25 years or so, of 35 new or newly recognised infections in humans, 20 (57 per cent) have been zoonotic in origin - some trivial, some devastating to both the individual and the community.

“In Australia, Toxoplasmosis and Salmonellosis are two infections with public health significance directly related to the handling, processing and consumption of kangaroo meat. A recent food-borne outbreak of Toxoplasmosis caused acute clinical illnesses in 12 humans and one case of congenital chorio-retinitis (inflammation of the eye tissue) in a new born baby. The mother of the baby with the other 12 people had attended a function at which rare kangaroo medallions were served. A thorough epidemiological examination concluded that the most likely risk food was the kangaroo meat.”

Toxoplasmosis is caused by a protozoan parasite; symptoms include fever, headache, weakness, muscle pains and liver dysfunction lasting one to four weeks. The cysts are killed by thorough cooking, but survive in rare cooked meats. As kangaroo meat is often undercooked, chances of infection are greater.

A scientific report from the International Health Organisation warns that wild animal meats which are raw, undercooked, dried or cold-smoked are potentially infectious to animal or humans that eat them.

Dr Obendorf states: “The concern is that chefs recommend cooking methods which would not kill this [Toxoplasma] parasite.” (22)

He continues: “I know of no comprehensive or recent serological or direct parasitic survey of kangaroos for Toxoplasma prevalence. It would seem very necessary that Australian authorities can reassure ‘roo meat consumers about the safety of this product. Toxoplasma is one defined public health risk associated with game meat from Australia. In addition there is no data available to assess whether these free-ranging pseudo-ruminants (ie macropod marsupials) are likely to have any transmissible spongiform encephalopathy conditions.

“In the case of Toxoplasma, the ‘absence of evidence’ of disease freedom, - in itself is concerning, as importing WTO member countries should be requiring the ‘evidence of absence’ before permitting this meat to be made freely available or stipulating that (1) meat undergoes processing measures to kill this organism through freezing for a defined period of time and/or (2) labelling the meat with a warning and providing precise cooking instructions to customers. This should be a basic requirement for minimising the food-borne risk against Toxoplasma infection.” (35)

Australian doctors in 1997 warned of a new threat to human health from eating kangaroo meat. Two victims have been identified and one, a Tasmanian man, suffered a mysterious illness for many years before eventually being placed on a ventilator. He was unable to stand and was losing his power of speech before the parasite was detected. (The nematode worm inhabits muscle cells making it very difficult to detect.)

Dr Erika Cox, clinical microbiologist at Launceston General Hospital, said: “Laboratory tests suggest a new species of microscopic worm is responsible.” She added: “People who eat kangaroos and wallabies are at risk of all kinds of parasites that are not normally studied because they don't occur in livestock.”

Professor John Goldsmid, medical microbiologist at the University of Tasmania, claims that the cases illustrate how little is known about the potential for ‘native’ animals to infect humans. He also questions the safety of exporting ‘native’ meats from Australia to countries such as the UK and maintains that further research is needed. He stressed that the trend to undercook kangaroo involved “probable dangers”. (15)

Dr Obendorf says: “Australia has no dedicated research or diagnostic facility to investigate wildlife diseases. Detections of new diseases are handled on an ad hoc basis by government or university laboratories”.

Some states of Australia rejected kangaroo meat for many years because of lack of hygiene and control in the killing of these animals. In fact in most states it only became legal to sell kangaroo meat for human consumption in 1993!

One in two kangaroos may harbour Salmonella (16). Killing in the outback and the time delay between processing and cool storing is obviously a problem for bacterial contamination. Shooters are supposed to carry out pre-death inspections - monitoring the movement of an animal to determine if there is any apparent indication of sickness. Shooting animals at night requires them to be static, transfixed by the spotlight so any such inspections are impossible. If the animal is ill and the meat becomes fevered after death, the dark colouring of kangaroo meat ensures



Kangaroos are killed in the outback where even basic hygiene procedures would be difficult to follow

there are few visual indications of the condition.

Because of the many external and internal parasites, kangaroos killed between sunset and sunrise are supposed to be placed under refrigeration within two hours of sunrise. Shooters often travel long distances for their night's kill and in summer there are few hours of darkness. Again there is no monitoring of this regulation and no supervision that can reject meat delayed through mechanical breakdown or from vehicles which have become bogged down. The whole process of regulation is worthless.

As Wally Curran, secretary of the Australian Meat Industries Employees Union, stated:

"The only thing game about kangaroo meat is that you would need to be game to eat it."

The Skin Trade

Whilst in the UK Viva!'s campaign against the kangaroo meat industry can be called an unequivocal success, unfortunately the skins are still sold to international markets and make up a vital part of the dead kangaroo's value, with exports totalling \$22 million in 2004 (71).

Kangaroo skin is used to make sporting goods such as football boots, running shoes, cycling shoes, baseball mitts and golf bags; also other accessories including hats, belts and bags. Whole skins are used as rugs, and perversely, the scrotums of male kangaroos are turned into novelty purses. Shockingly, as will be discussed later, it is actually football boot manufacturers who are the biggest users of kangaroo skin.

In New South Wales and South Australia shooting kangaroos for their skins only is illegal. However in Queensland - the State with the highest level of commercial killing - and in Western Australia, it does occur. In Western Australia, the percentage of kangaroos shot for their skins only is relatively small, but in Queensland, the incidence of skin-only-shooting is high.

Skin-only-shooting takes place in remote areas where it is simply not possible to get kangaroo carcasses to a processing plant in time to comply with hygiene regulations. When the price of kangaroo meat drops, skin-only-shooting may increase as it becomes economically unviable to transport the meat long distances to processing plants.

Kangaroo skin exports (2001*)	
	number of skins
Italy	450530
Japan	259817
Indonesia	211245
Germany	161659
Hong Kong	141683
New Zealand	83687
USA	60650
United Arab Emirates	60000
India	59408
China	51126
Korea	39439
Vanuata	28313
Thailand	25622
Bangladesh	15000
Taiwan	11153
Burma	10077
Singapore	8539
Fiji	6936
Philippines	3840
Malayasia	3310
UK	2662
Turkey	2400
Dominican Republic	1277
New Caledonia	210
Pakistan	201
South Africa	80
Zimbabwe	80
Canada	80
Brunei	40
Denmark	8
Total	1699072

Source: Environment Australia

* Latest detailed figures available

According to John Kelly of the Kangaroo Industries Association of Australia, 10 per cent of kangaroos who are killed commercially are killed for their skins (46). However, by our own calculations, it seems that it is at least double that.

In 2002, RSPCA Australia prepared for Environment Australia the Kangaroo Shooting Code compliance: A Survey of the Extent of Compliance with the Requirements of the Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos. This was based on figures for the year 2000 (and has not been updated as of time of writing), in that year 1,378,505 kangaroos were killed commercially in Queensland (47), 559,419 of whom were shot for their skins only (48) ie 41 per cent of the total commercial kill for that state. The total kill figure across the states for 2000 was 2,746,402 (49), meaning the kangaroos killed for their skins in Queensland account for 20 per cent of the total harvest. That percentage does not take into account kangaroos also killed for their skins in Western Australia.

The sale of the skins is as profitable to the shooter as the sale of the meat. According to Pat O'Brien of the Wildlife Protection Association of Australia: "[Shooters] get about \$10 to \$15 (Australian dollars) for a large skin, and a similar amount for meat. If they shoot a large animal for meat and skins, they get \$20 to \$30. However, skin only shooting is more economical because they don't have to worry about getting meat back to a chiller. They camp in the scrub for a couple of weeks, and come back to town when they have run out of food or have a truck-full of skins." (50)

Running Scared

Kangaroo skins may well be used for items including fashion accessories and rugs but it is sporting goods manufacturers who are the kangaroo skin industry's biggest customers. In July 2002 a press release issued by the Kangaroo Industries Association of Australia entitled '*The kangaroo industry is under attack and needs your help*' appeared on www.e-xoticmeat.com, a website dedicated to promoting to the sale of 'exotic meats' – in other words, the slaughter of wild animals for profit (51).

The release begins:

"A United Kingdom based radical animal liberation organisation called Vegetarians International Voice for Animals has launched a campaign targeting Adidas and other manufacturers for their use of kangaroo leather in top class soccer boots."

It continues:

"This [soccer boot] market is vital to the kangaroo industry. Without it underpinning kangaroo skin prices the entire industry would be at risk."

The desperate call for help ends with:

"Can you please take a few minutes to drop a note to Adidas and the other major users of kangaroo leather, reassuring them that there is public support for the use of kangaroo goods ... The Kangaroo Industries

Association of Australia thanks you in advance for your help and support.”

There for all to read is confirmation straight from the horse’s mouth that football boot manufacturers are the driving force behind the kangaroo massacre and that it is companies such as Adidas who are keeping the whole kangaroo industry afloat!

Killing for Kicks

The sporting goods market is dominated by US-based Nike in first place and the German company Adidas-Salomon in second (52). Whilst Nike holds the lion’s share of the market for sporting goods in general, Adidas hold 70 per cent of the market for professional football boots (53). Adidas recently bought Reebok International Ltd for \$3.8 billion, which gives it around 20 per cent of the US market, putting it better in a position to challenge Nike (60).



A Viva! activist, dressed as the Grim Reaper, takes position outside the Stockport Adidas Centre as part of a national Day of Action

Adidas uses kangaroo skin to make several different models of sports shoe, but its Predator range of professional football boots are the most well known – and the highest selling. In 2002, Adidas sold over 500,000 pairs of the Predator Mania boot (54).

In 2004, Adidas launched another major football boot made of kangaroo leather - the F50+.

(Note: Adidas are not the only manufacturers using kangaroo skin – Nike, Umbro, Kappa, Mizuno, Diadora, Lotto, Reebok and Kelme are just some of the other companies who use kangaroo skin to make at least one model of football boot or running shoe. The French company Carnac uses kangaroo skin for cycling shoes.)

Viva! has written to Adidas on many occasions, including copies of video footage filmed on a kangaroo hunt showing a hunter shooting a protected kangaroo and stamping on a baby joey’s head to kill it. Despite these obvious examples of cruelty being captured on film, Adidas refuses to acknowledge the part it is playing in the cruelty by continuing to buy the skins, and has stated that as long as the industry is ‘legal’, it will continue to use kangaroo skin.

At a meeting in February 2003 between Claudia Tarry, Viva! campaigner, and Frank Henke (Global Director of Social and Environmental Affairs) and Anne Putz (Corporate PR Manager) of Adidas-Salomon, the Adidas representatives displayed an alarming lack of knowledge about the practices of the industry they so vociferously support and defend.

When asked if Adidas approved of the killing of joeys, which routinely takes place when pregnant/nursing

females are killed, Mr Henke commented that Adidas buys skins mostly from male animals. When asked how he knew this to be true he answered that the suppliers told him. When presented with the fact that if Adidas buy skins “mostly” from male animals, then at least some of the skins must come from females – and therefore involve the killing of joeys – Mr Henke’s response was: “That is your own conclusion.” Given the facts, it is, surely, the only conclusion that can be reached!

When Mr Henke was asked if Adidas approved of hunters killing the joeys by bludgeoning, decapitating them or shooting them in the head, he emphatically answered “no!” – but went on to add: “But that is referring to hunters acting outside of the Code of Practice, and we only buy skins from hunters who comply with the Code.” Mr Henke has obviously not even bothered to read the Code of Practice, which his organisation speaks so highly of and maintains is an assurance of humane killing – because those three methods of disposing of the baby joeys are precisely the way the Code of Practice recommends!

In 2004, Viva! campaigner Justin Kerswell once again wrote to Mr Henke, including articles which clearly illustrated that not only is the kangaroo killing industry unsustainable, the Government in Australia is aware of this but is so reliant on the trade that it is taking no steps to tackle the issue.

Sent as evidence of the population crisis to Adidas were two articles published in the *Australian Daily Telegraph* by environmental editor Simon Benson (64, 65).

The articles detailed how leaked Government documents have showed that “kangaroo populations have declined so much in the past 12 months there would not be enough to meet the demands of the kangaroo industry”. The article *‘Too few roos to go round’* goes on to say that, “The situation was ‘unprecedented’ in that commercial demands now far outweighed the sustainable population, according to an internal Department of Environment document. ... Falling numbers meant industry demands would not be met over the next two to four years. ... “This situation is unprecedented in the history of the kangaroo industry and the Kangaroo Management Plan”.”

Benson, points out that there is “deep concern” by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) about the conservation of kangaroo populations, already decimated by drought – and that “... numbers are as low as they have been in 22 years”. It is telling that the Kangaroo Industry Association themselves have expressed concern (in another leaked document), but rather than ending this trade, have campaigned for minimum size limits due to “marked effects on stock supply”. The opening up of new commercial killing fields is the industry’s desperate attempt to keep itself afloat. In *‘Hunt begins in new kangaroo zones’*, a source on the Government’s own kangaroo management advisory committee responded by saying: “It is unjustifiable and unacceptable. There are small numbers of kangaroos.”

The articles also detail how internal NPWS documents show that the Government was warned three years ago about the increasing demand for kangaroo ‘product’ and the subsequent “ problems with sustaining populations”. However, the NPWS actually recommended that quotas for 2004 be kept at current levels. The article goes on to state that the NPWS’ kangaroo management division – the body responsible for advising the Government on cull quotas – is entirely funded by money it receives from the kangaroo industry.

Also sent to Adidas was the article 'Roo shortage in SA', from an Australian rural news website (66), which details that the situation is so dire that even 'field processors' are leaving the industry in droves. Also, we sent evidence that one of Adidas' main claims – that they only accepted skins from kangaroos that were killed humanely – was false: *BBC Wildlife Magazine* published details how an Australian court has heard that kangaroo meat and skin is being exported on to world markets (such as Adidas) "without verification the animals were killed humanely". (67)

In communication both with Viva! and members of the public who write to complain, Adidas refuse to address the killing of joeys. They obviously realise that it is indefensible.

The kangaroo industry and kangaroo processing plants are – unsurprisingly – very reluctant to divulge how many pairs of shoes come from one dead kangaroo. Requests for such information to both the KIA and Packer Leather, the largest specialist tanner and supplier of kangaroo leather products, have been ignored on several occasions.

It is very difficult to estimate how many kangaroos are killed to make football boots. However, this information is provided by Dr David Croft of the University of New South Wales:

"I expect since most leather shoes only have a leather upper that several pairs (2-5) could be made. I understand that there is some wastage from males since fighting scars the abdominal skin." (55)

Even if we are generous and assume that five pairs of shoes are made out of each kangaroo skin, 500,000 pairs of Predator Mania boots equates to 100,000 dead kangaroos! And that figure, of course, does not take into account the joeys who are killed when pregnant and/or nursing female kangaroos are killed. Adidas have the blood of hundreds of thousands of kangaroos on their hands – and tragically, many of today's top international footballers wear the products of the butchery on their feet.

David Beckham: Profit Over Principles?

Adidas is well aware of the value of 'celebrity' endorsement and spends tens of millions of dollars each year on corporate and individual sponsorship. It owns a 10 per cent share in Bayern Munich football team and sponsors international stars of the sports world. Perhaps the most well known, and highly paid, sportsman on its books is David Beckham, captain of the England football team who uprooted from Manchester United to Real Madrid in 2003. Adidas pay Beckham £4 million per year (56) to wear and promote its goods, including until recently the kangaroo skin Predator boot. In 2005, Beckham unveiled his new personal logo at the Adidas-Salomon Global Headquarters in Herzogenaurach, Germany, extending his contract with the company until 2008 (57).

David Beckham is one the highest paid football players in the world. Until recently, he promoted the Adidas Predator football boot made from kangaroo skin. In 2006, he moved over to synthetic materials, largely in response to Viva!'s campaign



Viva! has written to David Beckham on several occasions. In 2003, we wrote to him care of his then manager Tony Stephens at SFX Sports Group, telling him about the cruelty he is supporting by wearing kangaroo skin boots, and on one occasion sending by recorded delivery a letter and copy of the video *Killing for Kicks* both

to his home address in Hertfordshire and care of SFX. Mr Stephens has ignored most correspondence from Viva! completely, however in February 2003, in response

to a letter from Viva! once again asking David to switch to promoting synthetic boots instead, Mr Stephens replied saying: "Your letter to David... arrived this morning... I will be in Manchester with David tomorrow evening and will discuss it with him then." (58)



Whilst David Beckham no longer wears boots from kangaroo skin, the majority of Adidas's newest range is still made from kangaroo leather

This confirmed that Beckham was indeed aware of the cruel kangaroo skin industry and that far from being protected from the issue by his management company, they were in fact going to discuss it with

him in person. It is rather tragic, then, that after that meeting in Manchester, neither Tony Stephens nor Beckham himself ever got back to us and ignored consecutive attempts at a dialogue. As a result of this we could only conclude that David Beckham put money before morals and was happy to promote a product which is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of adult kangaroos and their babies, because he was paid to do so.

Beckham has since appointed 19 Entertainment as his agents. In 2005, he launched the Predatorpulse Dragon made from kangaroo leather. In August 2005, major stories appeared in the major British newspapers *The Sunday Times* 'Beckham kangaroo boots get kicking' (61) and the *Daily Express* 'Your kangaroo boots are killers, Beckham is told' (62). Sam Relph in the *Daily Express* wrote: "Animal rights group Viva! claims the Adidas Predator Pulse promoted by Beckham is partly responsible for the world's biggest annual wildlife slaughter, in which baby kangaroos are killed". Both papers graphically outlined the Australian Government's guidelines for the disposal of joeys: "By decapitation or heavy blow to the skull to destroy the brain." Beckham and Adidas were once again confronted with the stark reality and their part in the bloody slaughter down under. In response, Adidas hid behind the same weak rebuttals they have been espousing for years, whilst Beckham's agents were quoted as saying: "He would consider evidence from Viva! but he was guided by Adidas on the humane killing of kangaroos".

In November 2005 Adidas announced a new version of the Predator football boot: the +Predator Absolute. The Beckham signature version of this boot (the Cardinal/Silver) is synthetic! Finally, after years of persuasion by Viva!, Beckham has come to his senses and no longer supports the largest massacre of land mammals in the world today. This about-face prompted headlines around the world, including a major story in the *Independent on Sunday* in February 2006. Sadly, this new found conscience doesn't stretch right across Adidas, as the rest of the Absolute range continues to be made from kangaroo leather, as does much of the current F50 range. It begs the question, why, if this new synthetic boot designed for Beckham is the 'best ever', does Adidas continue to peddle the skins of dead kangaroos? Surely, if it's good enough for arguably the best football player in the world it's good enough for everyone else!

Friends and Foe

In February 2003, the campaign against kangaroo slaughter gained an unexpected ally, in the form of the designer of the original Predator football boot, the ex-Liverpool FC, Australian football player Craig Johnston.

Johnston invested over a million pounds of his own money developing a shoe that, due to the combination of its high-tech design and the use of modern, synthetic fabrics, allowed the wearer to give the ball more control, more power and more swerve. Adidas secured the rights to manufacture the revolutionary product in the early 1990s and the Predator went on to become the world's best selling football boot.

Once Adidas were in control of production they decided to start making it out of kangaroo skin, claiming that it is lightweight, strong, and has a high tensile strength. In February 2003, Mr Johnston expressed his views about Adidas' decision:

"The original model [of the Predator] was an all-rubber shoe. Synthetics, rubbers and new materials are definitely the future of football boots. I don't agree with killing kangaroos." (59)

Adidas may have consciously decided to fly in the face of modern design and technology by using the skins of butchered kangaroos rather than state-of-the-art synthetic materials, apart from the new Beckham synthetic boot, but thankfully Nike, Adidas' number one rival in the sporting goods arena, has realised that synthetic materials are the way ahead. In fact, Nike has developed KNG-100: synthetic kangaroo skin. It is used in the manufacture of the Air Zoom professional boot, favoured by top class international players including Figo, Totti, Davids and Carlos.

The best endorsement for synthetic boots comes in the shape of the Brazilian football player Ronaldo, arguably the best footballer in the world. Ronaldo, who has a lifetime sponsorship deal with Nike, wears the Mercurial Vapor, which is made of a fabric they call Nikeskin, also 100 per cent synthetic and 50 per cent more durable than leather. (NB unfortunately, Nike continue to make one range of football boot, the Tiempo Premier, out of kangaroo skin.)

Interestingly, while Adidas place their kangaroo skin Predator at the top end of the price range, selling them for more than £100 a pair in a deliberate attempt to market them as a top quality product, Nike's synthetic



Viva! has campaigned at major football events in the last five years, in an attempt to end the use of kangaroo leather in the production of football boots

models are the more expensive boots with its kangaroo skin boots being considerably cheaper.

Viva! takes on Adidas

In 2003, Viva!USA filed a lawsuit against Adidas America Inc and three sports shops for illegally selling kangaroo skin Predator boots in California.

California has often been a leader in progressive legislation and in the 1970s passed a law to protect kangaroos, crocodiles and alligators by prohibiting the import and sale of products made from their body parts. It was a commendable attempt to protect wildlife from commercial exploitation and keep it where it belongs - in the wild. In what appears to be a direct flouting of this penal code, Adidas has been selling its kangaroo skin Predator boots in sports shops around the state.

Having discovered this potential law breaking, Viva!USA found attorneys willing to take on the case pro bono and the lawsuit was filed. Reuters, Associated Press and all major wire services sent the news around the world and international media immediately picked up on it. The day the lawsuit was filed – Adidas' share price dropped!

In what seems more than coincidence, California state senator Dennis Hollingsworth introduced a bill into the state legislature to repeal that same penal code on which our action is based, but it was eventually quashed. 2004 saw two bills introduced, but both were unsuccessful due to lobbying by Lauren Ornelas of Viva!USA.

In 2005, despite the overwhelming evidence supplied by Viva!USA to show that it was vital to keep the ban in place, Assembly woman Nicole Parra (Representing Fresno, Kern, Kings, and Tulare Counties – and supported by Adidas) introduced the bill AB734 to overturn it. Once again Senators listened to reason, and it was stopped in the Senate Natural Resources Committee.

However, in November 2005 the First District Court of Appeal ruled that California's ban on importing shoes and other items made from the hides of Australian kangaroos cannot be enforced as federal law takes precedence, despite California state law clearly banning such sales.

Viva! Attorney Orly Degani announced the group is considering an appeal to the California Supreme Court, saying "We're talking about a very cruel practice that the California Legislature does not want to condone."

Viva! will continue to lead the boycott of Adidas, and will do so until they finally face facts and cease killing for kicks.

The Future: Tourism?

It is tragic that some people need to put a commercial value on wildlife. They have no true appreciation or understanding of the natural world and are intent on destroying it. They feel the world belongs to them; that they have the right to kill other species because it gives them pleasure, a rush of power and money - or because of sheer ignorance. Any pretence that killing kangaroos is to 'prevent extinction' or to 'control pests' is simply

an attempt to gain public and media acceptance. However, the kangaroo industry is not a benign force - it is destructive, cruel and brutal and responsible for the worst land wildlife massacre this planet has seen.

It is ironic that if you do accept that wildlife can be valued monetarily, then kangaroos are worth more alive than dead. Stafford Smith (1994) has shown that the value of mining and tourism in the Australian rangelands far outstrips pastoralism and the relatively paltry income from killing kangaroos. Dr David Croft, School of Biological Science, UNSW, says: "International nature-based tourism had a value to Australia of \$6.6 billion in 1995. More than half this expenditure was in national parks." Despite the almost complete lack of promotion of a great wildlife experience in the Australian outback, tourists spent \$343 million in 1995 on outback safaris (the kangaroo industry is worth around \$200 million in 2005 - less if you take into account subsidies). Croft says: "Many an outback tourist will lament that of the few kangaroos they saw, the majority were roadkills." (43)



In Australia, outback safaris account for only around 3 per cent of tourist activity – despite the fact that these tourists spend twice the average and considerably more in other outdoor activities such as scuba diving. It is therefore astonishing that this obvious potential is almost untapped. Australian politicians are also well aware of the power of the kangaroo as an icon to sell tourism to those overseas – a report for the Parliament of Victoria into Ecotourism mentions that "such icons are strongly linked with our national image and are at least partially responsible for tourism income of hundreds of millions of dollars". The same report notes the incredible potential for ecotourism by discussing a submission to the committee that estimates the conservation industry could create "a combined value of ... \$10 billion with an annual turnover of \$5 billion per annum. It would employ 60,000 people. It would earn Australia \$100 billion per annum in wildlife tourism. It would be worth as much to Victoria as its whole primary production combined".

Dr Croft compares the poor promotion and development of wildlife safaris in Australia with the excellent profile of South Africa. He contrasts Sturt National Park, western New South Wales with the Kalahari-Gemsbok Park in South Africa/Botswana. The climate and landscape of both parks are similar with low rainfall, hot summers, ephemeral rivers, dune fields, pans and stony plains (43).

Croft maintains that poor marketing and development of wildlife tourism in Australia means that while the Kalahari-Gemsbok Park enjoys 48,000 visitors per year with large annual growth since the release of Nelson Mandela and changes in the political system, Sturt National Park has 12,000 visitors per year. Croft argues that dingoes should be reintroduced to Sturt to help restore biodiversity and provide the drama of predation, and

that the variety of mammals (especially kangaroos), reptiles (46 species) and birds (150 species) would attract many more visitors if managed correctly. He says: "We should emphasise our assets. Kangaroos have a body form unlike any other mammal. A European or American visiting Africa sees antelopes which share the same form as familiar deer, sheep and goats. In contrast, the hopping locomotion, the bipedal stance endowing the kangaroo with human-like behaviour and the joey in the pouch will leave international visitors entranced." (43)

Croft lists the benefits of such a strategy where wildlife is admired and respected, rather than blasted to bits. They include countering the extensive criticism worldwide for needlessly killing wildlife; recognising the intrinsic worth of kangaroos and Australia's exceptional wildlife heritage before it is too late; sustaining large populations of kangaroos as desirable and valuable; adding to the economic value of tourism; restoring biodiversity and expansion of protected areas; generating economic activity in rural communities.

Croft says: "Australia is perhaps the only country which is capable of maintaining large protected and wilderness areas without strong human population pressures on their boundaries. We cannot lecture other nations about maintenance of habitat and biodiversity if we, with the best possible circumstances, cannot get it right. It is time to show leadership and innovation on the world stage." (43)

In 2005, Viva! launched its website: Australia's Hidden Shame (<http://www.savethekangaroo.com/tourism/>), which revealed the kangaroo is second only to the Statue of Liberty as the most recognised tourist icon in the world, and called for end of the annual kangaroo slaughter and for Australia to promote and nurture its wildlife through Ecotourism. Thousands of emails were sent to both the Australian Government and the Australian tourism industry from potential holiday makers from all around the world, telling them that they would 'think twice' about travelling to Australia when they continued to promote themselves with the kangaroo, whilst millions of them are killed every year out of the view of tourists.

Viva! Concludes

Throughout human history, massacres of animals have taken place for pleasure or monetary gain. Each and every one of them, from the harpooning of whales to the shooting of passenger pigeons, the near annihilation of Africa's wildlife to the hunting of otters, foxes and deer, has been justified, excused and encouraged by those with a personal interest in the killing. Their arguments have, without exception, been proved wrong.

Human treatment of the wildlife of this globe and the habitats essential for its survival is a calamity. Those responsible appear to have learned nothing from history and continue to offer the same insupportable excuses for short-term commercial advantage. The fate of the world's wildlife is increasingly being determined by politicians and shop keepers who exclude morality from their decision making.

Viva! has stopped 1,500 supermarket stores from selling kangaroo flesh nationwide. We believe that the British public does not want the world's wildlife to be massacred for meat or skin. However other countries are importing the flesh and skin of these beautiful creatures. If this trade becomes further established, no wild animal will be safe. It is time for those with vision and compassion to work within Australia and in the countries that import kangaroo meat and skin on a concerted consumer campaign to stop the trade for good. Viva! plays its part, you can too!

To join the campaign to save the kangaroo, contact:

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Statements in support of Viva! from Australia:

"Viva! is bringing the misery of our wildlife to the world and we praise their work. We implore the British people to support Viva!'s campaign to save our kangaroos from terrible cruelty and greedy exploitation."

Maryland Wilson, Australian Wildlife Protection Council

"Animals Australia supports the vibrant work of Viva! to expose the suffering of kangaroos in Australia. Unfortunately too many Australians wrongly believe that kangaroos are in large numbers and must be slaughtered."

"The killing is undertaken only because there is a market, and dollars and rural votes are considered important by politicians. If only those whose taste buds are excited by kangaroo flesh could see the ghastly reality of the nightly killing of these magnificent animals."

Glenys Oogjes (BBSc), Executive Director, Animals Australia (umbrella body representing 37 animal protection groups in Australia)

"I support your campaign because huge numbers of pregnant female kangaroos and their babies are being slaughtered every night and families destroyed and scattered through the blood lust of an indescribably cruel industry. Sellers of kangaroo meat, in their greed for profits must take responsibility for the horror inflicted on innocent wildlife. They are to be condemned for supporting what amounts to genocide of kangaroos merely to make 30 pieces of silver."

The Honourable Richard Jones, Member of the Legislative Council, New South Wales

"I support Viva! because the kangaroo must be preserved for future generations and protected from the insatiable demands of the commercial kangaroo industry."

Marjorie Wilson, Kangaroo Protection Co-Operative

"The power of money has superseded wildlife management principles. We support Viva!'s work to right that wrong."

Lindy Stacker, Australia Against Commercialisation of Wildlife

"The Vegan Society (NSW) wholeheartedly supports the Viva! campaign to stop the kangaroo massacre in our country. The unsupervised and often inept slaughter of this native marsupial in the Australian outback, which routinely sees joeys thrown carelessly from the pouch and left to die, is a national disgrace. While cattle and sheep farming erode the land and contribute substantially to the highest rate of mammal extinctions in the world, this planet's largest massacre of a national symbol remains indefensible."

Vegan Society of New South Wales

"Viva!'s efforts to stop the sale and consumption of kangaroo meat in the UK are of utmost importance to the success of our campaigns here.

"The industry is bent on exploiting and killing our kangaroos into extinction. It cannot succeed, however, unless it is assured of a thriving export market, since kangaroo meat at home is neither popular nor expensive. No wonder industry representatives saw red and reacted with indignant defensiveness at Viva!'s success with Tesco followed by Juliet Gellatley's speaking tour of Australia.

"We fully support Viva!. Together we can make our voices heard across national boundaries for the preservation of indigenous wildlife is a global issue."

Rheya Linden, AnimalActive! Australia

"For Australia to sell kangaroo meat to the UK not only countenances cruelty for profit but holds Australia up as barbaric in its treatment of animals. It smacks of hypocrisy to hold up the kangaroo as our emblem and slaughter them in their millions for profit."

Lynda Stoner, Animal Liberation (NSW)

"The International Fund for Animal Welfare wholeheartedly supports Viva!'s work to stop the massacre of kangaroos for meat and skin.

"The killing of kangaroos is the largest wildlife slaughter in the world and involves unavoidable and sickening cruelty."

Sally Wilson, IFAW Australia

"I applaud Viva!'s tireless work to stop the indefensible slaughter of our native wildlife for meat."

Andrew Bartlett, Australian Democrat Senator for Queensland

"Animal Liberation Victoria totally supports Viva!'s vigorous campaign alerting the public to the cruel slaughter of Australia's kangaroos. The nighttime massacre with spotlights, guns and axes of these gentle marsupials is the largest wildlife slaughter in the world and an international disgrace. The bloodshed and brutality must stop and we plead to people around the world to help save the kangaroos."

Patty Mark, Animal Liberation (Vic)

"Every night while Australia sleeps, 10,000 kangaroos are massacred for profit. We cannot remain silent in the face of this ongoing abuse of sentient beings. Animal Liberation NSW applauds Viva's campaign to raise public awareness and bring an end to this terrible slaughter."

Margaret Setter, Animal Liberation (NSW)

"The kangaroo is a symbol of Australia. A bloody symbol of a nation whose leaders turned away from their moral, social and environmental responsibility. The kangaroos fate is deliberate, politically induced extinction so that a few may gain from the death of a species."

Australian Wildlife Protection Council

Viva!

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