

MORETON ISLAND CANE TOAD FREE!

Moreton Island is one of Brisbane's major natural assets and one of the few locations in coastal Queensland where cane toads have not established. Any accidental introduction will affect your enjoyment of campsites and waterways and cause serious impacts to local wildlife.



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PROTECT MORETON ISLAND?

Check for cane toads before travelling and when you unpack. You are likely to find them hiding in firewood, fishing and camping gear, building materials, tyre wells, trailers, and swags.

GOOD MANAGEMENT OR GOOD LUCK?

LATEST MORETON ISLAND CAMPAIGN REVEALS NO EVIDENCE OF CANE TOADS

The latest Cane Toad Campaign on Moreton Island found no evidence of cane toads. Both live and dead cane toads had been found on previous Campaigns, with frequent indications of toads from Cane Toad Detector Dogs (CTDDs).

Prior Campaigns coincided with dry weather. Questions were raised as to what would be revealed if a Campaign coincided with wet conditions? In contrast this Campaign was undertaken in weather consisting of heavy showers, overcast skies and high humidity. It was thought that if cane toads were going to be found on Moreton Island – it would be on this Campaign.

The Cane Toad Free Status of Moreton Island is to the credit of Brisbane City Council in funding this important initiative, together with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Tangalooma Resort and Moreton Island Adventures.

April 12 - 17, 2019

Brisbane City Council Cane Toad Detector Dog Campaign

Supported by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), Tangalooma Resort, MICAT/Moreton Island Adventures and Moreton Island Protection Committee (MIPC).

The Campaign was undertaken by internationally renowned dog trainer Steve Austin, using specialised Cane Toad Detector Dogs (CTDDs) Becky, Emma, Tommy and trainee, Ziggy. Searches were done through the townships, camping grounds, Waste Transfer Stations and Tangalooma. Promotion, involvement and cooperation from the public in maintaining the “Cane Toad Free Status” of Moreton Island is a big part of the Campaign. In addition, water samples from selected sites were taken to be sent for analysis.

Day 1: Friday, April 12

Steve Austin arrived at Tangalooma with Brisbane City Council officers Dane Hansen and Robyn Jones. A demonstration with the CTDDs and a hidden dead cane toad was held for resort guests on the lawn outside the Tangalooma Education Centre. This always proves to be popular, allows for photo opportunities afterwards, and is a good awareness campaign for Tangalooma guests.

Checks were then made of Tangalooma Resort grounds with no indications from the CTDDs. Resort Manager Trevor Hassard, now with CTDD Reggie on the job, is proactive with continual checks of their gardens and any shipments of building, landscaping and garden materials to the resort. Trevor's environmental attitude and efforts above and beyond his job description should be commended.

Day 2: Saturday April 13

Squally showers continued throughout the day. We checked the remainder of Tangalooma Resort and then headed north to Ben Ewa and Cowan Point Campgrounds, and the Cowan Cowan Waste Transfer Station – all for no indications by the CTDDs.

William Leslie Street at Cowan was checked and we spoke to residents. Water samples were taken from creeks on the Cowan Bypass, the flowing Cravens Creek near the beach, and the creek near CB14. We noticed dogs on the beach at the northern end of the Cowan Bypass.

At CB14 the CTDDs gave strong indications. Campers just arrived were setting up, adding to the ghost camp they'd left previously. Nothing was found and we asked the campers to keep a watch, advising them we would return within a few days. Taking a water sample from the adjacent creek, a patch of Singapore Daisy was noted growing from the creek towards the beach, and was removed.

We continued checking CB camp sites and then onto the Bulwer Waste Transfer Station. It wasn't possible to do a check of Bulwer, as uncontrolled dogs roaming the northern end of the township were showing aggression to the CTDDs while they were still in the vehicle.

At Comboyuro Campground the CTDDs again indicated at the bins. This happens on every occasion. Previously I'd set cane toad traps there only to catch Striped Rocket Frogs. The toilets and showers were checked.

That night cane toad traps were set at Tangalooma Resort beside water in the bund drain where new turf had been laid near the Flensing Deck, and in gardens to the west.

Day 3: Sunday April 14

An early morning check revealed bait still in the trap near the bund drain, and bait gone but nothing in the other trap.

The Wrecks Campground was checked, and for the first time, no indications from the CTDDs. There were only a few campers. We spoke with Police Constable Brett who was about to stop vehicles off the MICAT for a breathalyser test. Simultaneously, we thought this would be the perfect opportunity for the CTDDs to do a vehicle check. As PC Brett was working alone, he welcomed our attention which would help him slow the traffic.



CTDD check and leaflet distribution to vehicles off the MICAT

This method of running the dogs over the vehicles on the beach was a quick and efficient way of checking vehicles. Leaflets on the Cane Toad Status of Moreton Island were handed to campers while they were waiting to be breathalysed. Many were returning for Easter and school holiday camping and said we had spoken to them last year.

Extensive water sampling occurred this day at creeks on the Western Beach. Again a patch of Singapore Daisy was noted at the creek behind the beach north of the Bulwer Helipad. Most was removed on a return visit after this Campaign. Further work needs to be done here with a brushcutter to cut long grass on the creek bank to enable removal of all Singapore Daisy.



Water Sampling - beachside creek at Bunkers south of Cowan Cowan

We drove to Blue Lagoon Campground, checked the shower and toilet block, and went on to North Point Campground checking around the QPWS shed, MIPC Nursery, toilet and shower block, and all campers in the campground.

That night at Tangalooma Resort, two traps were set again - at the garden south of the Police Station where a cane toad was found last Campaign, and in a garden to the east of the Flensing Deck.

Day 4: Monday April 15

The morning revealed a bandicoot caught in the trap south of the Police Station which was released. Water sampling was increased significantly on this Campaign. After sampling the creek near the Ranger Station, again we checked vehicles off the MICAT as police stopped drivers for breathalysing.

We returned to CB14 where CTDDs had indicated on Saturday. Campers said they had seen a large python about their camp site. With no other evidence found, we presumed this to be the reason for the CTDDs indication.

Water sampling continued at the beach lagoon off the Bulwer-North Point track to the west of Yellow Patch, Spitfire Creek, and Eagers Creek near EB11 camp site. We checked adjacent camp sites.

Again that night, traps were set at Tangalooma Resort in gardens east of the Flensing Deck.

Day 5: Tuesday April 16

The early morning check of the traps had only caught bandicoots which were released. We proceeded to drive to Koorinal which proved tricky due to exposed coffee rock near White Rock on the Ocean Beach.

Noticeably again on our drive into Koorinal, were increased numbers of juvenile Umbrella Trees and Asparagus Fern since our last visit. We checked around the toilet block, the Waste Transfer and Fire Stations, spoke to residents, and took a water sample from the waterway adjacent to the Airstrip.

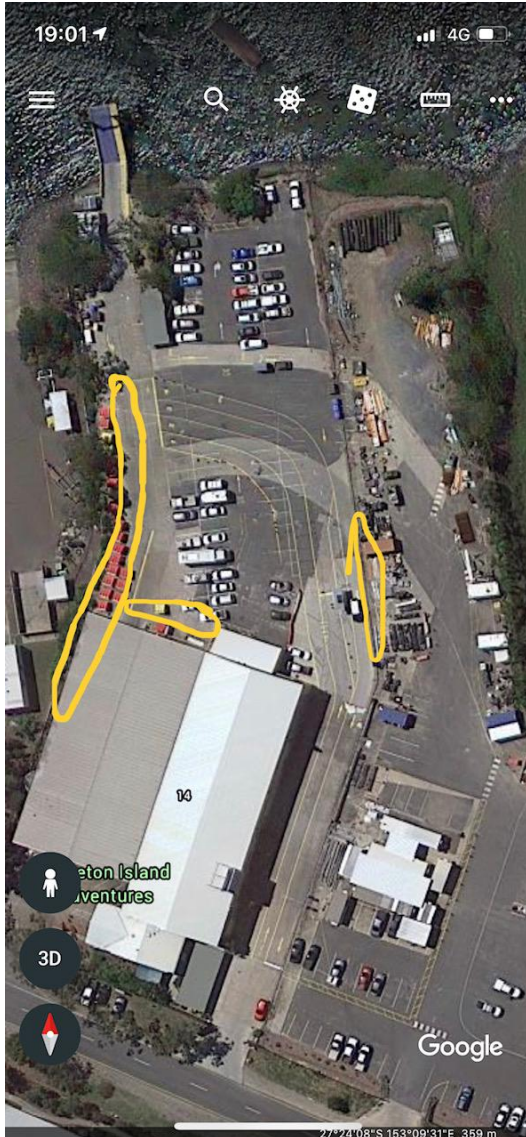
Unfortunately, and as had happened on previous Campaigns, we couldn't check the township due to the number of stray dogs roaming the streets.

Campsites were checked at WB on the Ocean Beach, water sampling taken at Blue Lagoon, the creek north of Blue Lagoon, and the water hole at the Yellow Patch campsites. Campsites in this area were also checked.

MICAT Terminal



Cane toads collected at the MICAT Terminal, Port of Brisbane



MIPC continues cane toad work on Moreton Island and the MICAT Terminal at the Port of Brisbane. The MICAT Terminal is riddled with cane toads and an obvious trigger for “the tipping point” for Moreton Island potentially succumbing to the cane toad invasion and resultant decimation of wildlife.

MIPC members trap cane toads here with numbers showing no sign of decrease.

This photo shows areas of cane toad concentrations at the MICAT Terminal - around the Waste Transfer Bins which go to Moreton Island, the MICAT rubbish bins, and at damp water points either side of the buildings.

Recommendations

Some previous recommendations continue to not be addressed and are noted again in this report.

1. All townships should have signs in relation to keeping Moreton Island “Cane Toad Free”. Currently there are signs as you board the MICAT, exit the MICAT at The Wrecks, and at the entrance to Cowan Township. Bulwer and Koorungal continue to have no signs nor do the major campgrounds.



Trainer Steve Austin with CTDD Tommy at the entrance to Cowan Township. Similar signage should be installed at Bulwer, Koorungal and major campgrounds

2. With each Campaign, we are being hindered more and more by uncontrolled dogs in the townships. Each biannual Campaign coincides with the school holidays - which possibly sees the problem at its worst. Council should act to ensure by laws in relation to dog control are upheld, and in so doing will also help protect the National Park.
3. Preventative action at the MICAT Terminal culling cane toads should be continued. The question arises – ***“Will the MICAT Terminal ever be a cane toad free area and not contribute to the colonization of Moreton Island by cane toads?”*** Cane toad fencing has not been erected. The effectiveness of preventive action should continue to be monitored.

4. **ALL** shipments of landscape materials, plants and mulch to the island via the MICAT and Tangalooma barges should be checked.
5. Ideally, a CTDD should check vehicles waiting to board or exit the MICAT.
6. Continue the advertising Campaign to Island residents and the public to help keep the “Cane Toad Free Status” of Moreton Island.
7. Redo Moreton Island Cane Toad leaflets to include a **CANE TOAD HOTLINE** – a mobile phone number to QPWS to advise sightings of cane toads. Most people now use their phone as a camera. If possible take a photo, note the location, and immediately forward the photo and details to the **CANE TOAD HOTLINE**. This assistance by the public and expansion of public awareness could be the difference in keeping Moreton Island Cane Toad Free.
8. Liaise with Tangalooma Resort and the Township Residents Committees to follow these prevention procedures.

At the time of writing, water sample results had not been received.

Brisbane City Council, Tangalooma Manager Trevor Hassard, QPWS Rangers and Ranger in Charge Terry Christensen, Roz Hawkins and Liz Shaw of Moreton Island Adventures should be commended for their ongoing efforts.

Thanks to Brisbane City Council for the opportunity to participate in such a worthwhile initiative. Moreton Island is a pristine final frontier against the cane toad invasion. Hopefully firm preventative action will maintain Moreton Island’s “Cane Toad Free Status” for future generations.

Greg Curtis

Moreton Island Protection Committee