

# Koala Management Guidelines for Plantation Harvest Operations (September 2013)

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**THESE GUIDELINES SHOULD BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE KOALA MANAGEMENT POLICY**

## **1. PROCEDURAL**

All plantation hardwood forest managers/owners should have as a minimum:

- a. A policy which provides for the protection of native wildlife;
- b. A system in place for ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and associated regulation, including the:
  - i. *Wildlife Act 1975 (Vic)*
  - ii. *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 (SA)*
  - iii. *Animal Welfare Act 1985 (SA)*
  - iv. *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (Vic)*
- c. Koala management procedures;
- d. A process for ensuring all people operating on a harvest site are inducted into the koala management procedures for the harvesting operation; and
- e. An evaluation and review process.

## **2. PLANNING**

During planning for harvest operations companies should obtain and consider the following information in developing harvesting prescriptions:

- a. Koala density:
  - i. Pre-harvest survey to estimate Koala population.
  - ii. Population data provided by relevant government agencies.
- b. Presence of neighbouring remnant native vegetation or blue gum plantation that koalas may relocate to.
- c. Size of the planned harvest area and harvest rate in high population areas.
- d. Sequence of harvest to prevent isolating populations from neighbouring habitat.
  - i. Where koalas are present and it is practical to do so, harvesting should be planned to facilitate natural dispersal into adjacent habitat.
- e. Prior to the commencement of harvest operations, companies are to have updated carer details. In isolated and densely populated plantations, working with

Department Environment and Primary Industries (Vic) (DEPI) and carers should be considered to ensure best outcomes are obtained.

### **3. OPERATIONAL CONTROLS**

As a minimum, the following operational controls should be implemented for all harvesting operations where koalas are present or are suspected to be present:

- a. Harvest inspections
  - i. Subject to the initial density survey, prior to the commencement of harvesting each day, and at regular intervals throughout the day (i.e. after meal breaks) the harvester/buncher operator (or other suitably trained or experienced personnel) should walk the area to be harvested to check for the presence of koalas. A system to document and record this is required. .
- b. Trees with koalas should be clearly marked with paint to alert the machine operator.
- c. A minimum of five trees must be retained immediately adjacent to the Koala tree. Retained trees may be subsequently harvested if/when koalas are no longer present
- d. Felling of trees likely to impact any tree with koalas present should be directed away from the koala tree.

*Consideration should be given to:*

- e. Temporary retention of neighbouring trees
- f. The area and number of trees to be retained is related to the density of koalas as well as the surrounding habitat for the koalas. Consideration should be given to retaining more than the minimum five trees to provide refuge for the koala and to act as protection from the falling of trees during harvesting.
- g. Use of aids to assist in koala location before and during harvesting.
- h. A post-harvest assessment should be conducted (with a carer, if possible) to identify any injured or dead animals. Details recorded should include;
  - Date Counted
  - Block Location
  - Name and Contact Details of Contractor (person counting koalas)
  - Number of Koalas left on the block
- i. Injured animals are to be reported as per point 4d Koala Welfare requirements.

### **4. KOALA WELFARE - INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING**

All plantation hardwood forest managers/owners should have as a minimum:

- a. An incident management process to deal with inadvertent koala injury with consideration for:
  - i. Immediate contact with trained carer/veterinarian identified in Timber Harvest Plan
  - ii. Training for situations that require koala handling
  - iii. Appropriate equipment on site should handling be required
  - iv. Importance of timely communication between the onsite supervisor and the forest owner/manager.

- b. A process to ensure Koala incidents are recorded and where required reported.

Details should include;

- Date of Incident
- Time of Incident
- Block Name
- Block Location
- Location of Koala (GPS)
- Nature of injuries
- Alive/Dead
- Fate (taken into care/ taken to vet)
- Name of Wildlife Carer or Veterinary Facility
- Name of Supervisor Reported To
- Name of Operator Reported By
- Follow Up Contact Phone Number

*This information should be sent to DEPI via email as soon as possible after harvesting.*

- c. Koala management reporting requirements as requested by the Department Environment and Primary Industries (Vic) and Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (SA).
- d. A mechanism to ensure harvested plantations where the post harvest survey show koalas remain are revisited to monitor koala well being.
- e. Awareness of the development and availability of protocols for dealing with koalas impacted by harvesting operations, including relocation, death and injury currently being prepared by the Department of Environment and Primary Industries.  
*Companies will need to update their guidelines once the protocols become available.*

## **5. TRAINING IN PROCEDURES**

- a. Ensure all harvesting equipment operators working in plantations considered likely or known to contain koalas have adequate training in this procedure.
- b. Consideration should also be given to training in koala behaviour and incident management.

## **6. EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

To ensure koala policy and procedures are being implemented and effective, companies should:

- a. Implement an ongoing program of monitoring to ensure operational controls are being adhered to.
- b. Conduct an annual review of incidents and update the Policy and Guidelines as appropriate. It is recommended that audit reports be made publicly available.
- c. Review koala policies and procedures on a regular basis to ensure they reflect the most up to date information.