

## Media release

## Talking toads reveals tales of mixed feelings



**Love them or hate them, Australians always have an opinion on the cane toad — and it's not always negative.**

**This was among the many findings researchers uncovered when canvassing northern Australians for their attitudes towards the notorious pest.**

To discover how public perception of the cane toad differs in different locations with different durations of co-habitation, researchers from the Bureau of Rural Sciences 'talked toads' with community members from Cairns, to Kowanyama, Ngukurr, Darwin, Kununurra and Broome.

Bureau of Rural Sciences senior social scientist Anna Carr will present the results of the social survey at the upcoming Global Biosecurity Conference being held in Brisbane from 28 February to 3 March.

Dr Carr said she was amazed by peoples' interest in the South American amphibian.

"No-one is indifferent to cane toads — people always have something say about the pest."

"It is extraordinary how engaged the public are around this issue. People were asking questions of us as much as we were questioning them."

"They wanted to know where cane toads had spread to, what impact they have had on the environment and whether there was a biological solution."

While most community members expressed negative feelings towards cane toads, the intensity of their feelings differed in different places.

In Kowanyama, far north Queensland, where cane toads were deliberately introduced during the 1970s, people were more accepting of the amphibian than in the other case study areas.

"Everyone knew the story of the cane toads being brought to Kowanyama in a flour drum to protect the area from snakes."

"While initially the number of snakes had gone down, local people have more recently noticed an increase in numbers of snakes and lizards.

"There were also many comments about how birds had learned to flip the toads over, in order to kill and eat them safely," Dr Carr said.

Participants in the different case study areas were also keen to discuss what they knew about cane toads, particularly ways to manage them.

Interestingly, many people mentioned concern about the humane treatment of cane toads.

"While most people felt cane toads should be managed somehow, and referred to a wide range of methods, there was a strong message that cane toads should be destroyed in a humane manner," Dr Carr said.

The research was carried out on behalf of the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA). While the complete results from the study will be available later this year, a snapshot will be provided at the Global Biosecurity conference.



The *Global Biosecurity 2010* is sponsored by: Horticulture Australia Limited, Grains Research and Development Corporation and the Australian Centre of Excellence for Risk Analysis.

Registrations for the conference are now open. Visit [www.globalbiosecurity2010.com](http://www.globalbiosecurity2010.com)

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