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DOG CONTROL PROGRAM ON MER ISLAND TO HELP NESTING SEA TURTLES

A partnership was formed between the TSRA Land and Sea Management Unit, **Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC)**, Mer Gedkem Le (TSI) Corporation RNTBC and MyPathways to reduce green sea turtle predation by dogs on Mer (Murray) Island.

Green sea turtles return to Mer Island each year to lay their eggs in the warm sand bordering a beautiful small basalt outcrop at the northern most tip of the Great Barrier Reef.

Female turtles are very vulnerable to being attacked by dogs as they make their way up the beach to deposit their eggs.

The community of Mer recognised that the loss of sea turtles in this manner is unacceptable and they wanted a coordinated approach to reduce the mortality rate.

The intensive two-week dog control program concluded mid-September for the second time on Mer Island; the first time was back in 2012 when up to 70 wild dogs were eradicated.

The program was a success with nine stray dogs either trapped, shot or taking bait, five community dogs euthanased and a further nine female dogs and one male dog desexed by the community vet.

Torres Strait Regional Authority Chairperson, Mr Joseph Elu, said management of our valuable natural resources is an ongoing challenge, and it is only achievable through communities and government bodies working together in a sustained way.

“Working together for a high value program such as this is an encouraging experience for all involved,” Mr Elu said.

“TSIRC have been working throughout the year to enforce the need for the community to register their pets and control the breeding of domestic dogs.

“So while the problem still remains to an extent, wild dog numbers seem to be a lot lower this year than in previous years, which is encouraging.”

Mr Elu said the removal of feral cats from the island was also included in this year’s control program, with five feral cats euthanased in the two-week period.

“During the extensive community consultations conducted as a lead up to the program commencing, the Mer community raised their concerns over the number of cats also predating on wildlife on the island,” Mr Elu said.

Mr Elu thanked the Mer Gedkem Le RNTBC, TSIRC, MyPathways, John Bowman and Jeremy Trembath from Katherine Vet Care, and TSRA LSMU staff for their collaborative effort.



Caption: Green Turtle on the reef near Mer Island (Image: Tristan Simpson, TSRA)



Caption: Green Turtle returning to the ocean after laying her eggs (Image: Tristan Simpson, TSRA)

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