

CANE TOAD FACT SHEET #2

The Cane Toad Frontline

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The complexity of the cane toad frontline

Over 15 months of consistent field work by the KTBs at the cane toad front has revealed that a designated 'front-line' is far more complex than is currently understood.

Movement has been west, south-west and north-west along at least 3 identified corridors facilitated by the wetter than expected 2005/2006 wet season.

At their nearest point the toads lie around 150km east of the WA/NT border.

Further research is vital to determine whether this is because there is no comparative data available on the 'frontline' movement of toads.

The KTBs are only just beginning to establish the complex nature of a 'front-line' therefore our strategies are constantly adapting to our increasing number of field observations.

However, it is clear to the KTBs at this point, that if we are to have any luck in holding back the toad tide and have some impact on disrupting the forward movement of cane toads, we need to understand the complex behavior of 'front-line' breeding toads.

Several models present themselves as a result of the KTB field work and have been established to encourage postgraduate scientific research projects:

- the cane toad 'frontline' is not a single line but more a series of 'different fronts' that comprise initially 'breeding' colonisation movements of mature toads
- this forward 'breeding' colonisation front is probably initially instituted by males moving forward and then calling for the mature females to join them
- once the 'breeding' has taken place and the colony established, the majority of mature toads then move forward along 'corridors' established by the wet (and still provide enough moisture or water to re-hydrate) to 'set-up' and wait out the dry
- it is imperative for the colonising mature toads to move on, in order to find a food source that would not be subjected to 'competition' as would be the case in the 'breeding-colonisation' area
- these leading mature colonising toads, particularly the large females, use the dry period to 're-energise' by taking in sufficient food to provide enough energy for the next round of breeding
- colonising and forward moving toads may be quite old (toads are reputed to live for as long as twenty years) and that toads that move forward on a continual basis may in fact be genetically coded to 'colonise' and breed' and then move on
- by removing these large mature forward moving breeders it will impact on the ability for toads to colonise new areas
- by decimating the population numbers of newly established breeding colonisation areas it will prevent a build-up of a new colonising front
- by removing toads from behind the front line this will have a further impact on cane toad populations and will eventually drive the cane toad 'frontline' further east and away from the WA/NT border
- excessive amounts of water during the 2005/2006 wet season meant that toads 'moved' more quickly and along greater distances than ever before recorded.



Metamorphs in the wet



Metamorphs in a pipe

Toad Toll
150,000

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