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# Bogus fox carcass and scats concern scientists

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HELEN KEMPTON



The Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) is investigating all the circumstances surrounding a fox carcass that was reported to the Department by a member of the public on Sunday.

THE State Government should consider making it a criminal offence to dump interstate fox carcasses and scats in Tasmania.

That's the view of two scientists who last year alerted Biosecurity Tasmania to anomalies in the analysis of fox scats, which supported the state's \$50 million eradication effort.

They have asked the Government to clarify the laws governing the importation of fox products and who enforces them.

Wildlife biologist David Obendorf and scientist Clive Marks have written to Attorney General Vanessa Goodwin asking her to consider criminalising such offences in order to bolster Tasmania's biosecurity systems.

The legal questions follow revelations that a fox found on the Frankford Highway in October was brought in from Victoria and "planted" by a Tasmanian and a leaked DPIPWE report from 2011 which showed "hoax" fox scats may have been submitted by a fox taskforce employee as evidence the pest was living here.

"Clarifying what laws and penalties exist to deter such behaviour has obvious relevance to biosecurity and invasive species management in Tasmania," they said in their letter to Dr Goodwin.

"We are advised by Tasmania Police that they do not enforce laws under the Tasmanian Animal Health Act nor the State Services Act."

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They said there was no law "that considers misconduct or intentional interference in the gathering of animal survey data to be a form of fraud and a criminal offence in Tasmania, even if this data is relied upon to form policy and allocate significant public resources".

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Primary Industries Minister Jeremy Rockliff said Tasmania Police carried out an inquiry into the Fox Eradication Program on the back of a complaint by Windemere MLC Ivan Dean that evidence had been fabricated and found no criminal offence had been committed.

“DPIPWE is reviewing the police report to determine if further action is required,” Mr Rockliff said.

He said the legal process around the department’s investigation that found the fox carcass near Exeter was brought in from the mainland by a Tasmanian man was continuing and no further comment could be made.

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