



 The red fox

Tasmania

British Ecological Society puts ‘expression of concern’ on scientific paper saying foxes widespread

PATRICK BILLINGS, Police Reporter, Mercury

June 16, 2017 9:00pm

 Subscriber only

A SCIENTIFIC journal has slapped an “expression of concern” on an article it published saying foxes were widespread in Tasmania.

It follows allegations aired last year that physical evidence of foxes in Tasmania had been

hoaxed.

In 2012 the British Ecological Society published the scientific paper “Foxes are now widespread in Tasmania” in its *Journal Of Applied Ecology*. The authors used DNA analysis of fox faeces, collected by Tasmania’s Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, to conclude the pest was widespread.

But a leaked department report since raised doubts about the evidence that was provided to the authors for analysis. The leaked report claimed 26 of 57 faeces were possible hoaxes.

“Sufficient evidence exists to suspect that some hoaxing has occurred via mainland fox scats being placed in the (Tasmanian) landscape,” it said.

It prompted Denison MP Andrew Wilkie to write to the British Ecological Society to ask if the leaked report had any “bearing” upon its article that foxes were widespread.

The Journal of Applied Ecology has since placed an “expression of concern” on the article. Managing editor Erika Newton said the “expression of concern” had been published because there was a DPIPWE investigation into the matter.

“When the outcome of this investigation is reported to the (journal) editors, the paper’s content will be reviewed in light of this information.”

DPIPWE is examining whether any of its employees working on fox eradication breached the State Service Act.

It followed a police review of material submitted by MLC Ivan Dean that alleged fox evidence had been hoaxed.

Police did not find any criminal wrongdoing but indicated potential inappropriate behaviour by public servants within DPIPWE.

The Integrity Commission is also investigating the issue.