

# LIVE SNAIL LISTING and IMPORTATION INTO AUSTRALIA.

## SUPPORTING STATEMENT:- 23rd JULY 2020.

- A) Having received a supportive response from the Tasmanian biosecurity service via the Primary Industries Minister, Guy Barnett, we are now applying for the listing of the brown garden snail (*Cornu aspersum*) (Petit gris) and a permit to import a number for breeding in Tasmania. These would be used as a food source and sold principally to restaurants throughout Australia and possibly also for export.
- B) The brown garden snail is commonly found throughout Tasmania and most of the cooler regions of Australia, having been introduced during colonisation. Our aim is to build an industry in Australia based on the breeding and production of this animal by using the same species of snail which has been bred and used in Italy as a food product ie Escargot(s) over many years. The Romans were eating snails over 2 thousand years ago and it is a very large primary industry throughout Europe and other countries.
- C) The International Heliciculture Institute in Cherasco has been responsible for the development of the snail industry in Italy and in conjunction with its many growers has bred the brown garden snail over several generations to be of much higher quality food product than our 'wild' snail, hence this application. Importing some of these from the Institute in Italy would speed up the process of trying to breed up a selection of Australian snails to a consistent standard for use as a quality, gourmet food product. The Italians put the name 'Muller' as a suffix to recognise the person who bred and selected quality snails many years ago.
- D) Over the past few years we have been working on developing a free range, outdoor, sustainable, biological snail production system suitable for the Tasmanian climate and soils in our area south east of Hobart. We also visited the Cherasco Institute two years ago having been in regular contact with it when establishing our small snail farm. We have been successful in breeding and growing snails collected from the wild but we have many which are not the size nor quality to supply to restaurants. Our snails which we have selected for weight, size and quality

have been provided as samples to restaurants in Tasmania, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane plus used in private functions.

Our breeding and production system is still in its trial phase but we can envisage a great future for an escargot industry in at least Tasmania.

The snails we have provided so far to restaurants, following EU prescribed food standards, have been described unanimously as good eating quality although some restaurants, particularly French, have been critical of the size.

Therefore we have many snails of less than the minimum 8 grams and small shell size which are unsuitable for sale.

There is a pet food industry which is willing to take small snails but at a low price.

**E)** There are a small number of snail producers in Australia attempting to supply a quality product but are experiencing the same issues as ourselves. We have been contacted quite regularly by potential snail producers from around Australia and as an educator and trainer in Horticulture and Agriculture I have given a number of presentations to interested groups.

**F)** Escargot production is one facet of the snail industry, as there is also a market for snail eggs (French Caviar) and a developing snail slime industry for use in natural, sustainable, high end cosmetics and medicines in Europe.

As an educator I found that school science curricula are using snails in their courses in England and also universities in Australia.

Another advantage is that snails can be stored successfully in a fridge for 60 days, frozen for later use for up to a year and can be processed.

**G)** The potential for an industry to develop in Australia, with the support of our Agriculture Departments and Institutes is huge but we need to have a base to breed from without spending many years breeding our own from our wild population.

**H) QUARANTINE:** Snails can carry parasites and microorganism as can many animals and plants which have been introduced into Australia, including fish.

The snail species in mention has been produced for human food for generations and is already present in numbers in Australia. I have consulted snail experts in Australia such as John Stanovic in

Queensland, to verify the species.

In my experience we have a rigorous Quarantine system in both Australia and in Tasmania in particular. If Tasmania Quarantine can take our imported snails through biosecurity checks on samples of their faeces plus a sample of live snails and have them analysed by the Government labs in Hobart, then this should determine any potential issues of introduced bio-contamination.

Before sending our snails to restaurants we starve the snails for a minimum of 5 days without food or water to purge them. The snails for human consumption are always boiled before being eaten. No one would wish to eat live, raw snails!

Before any of our snails were cooked and eaten for human consumption had a sample of our snails tested by the Government Analytical Labs in Hobart, both live and boiled, purged and non purged. They were considered safe for consumption. They had not tested snails previous to this and were quite interested!

We have also consulted the professor of food safety in Tasmania university, Tom Ross, who believes that snails chilled and cooked would be safe from possible harmful bacteria and parasite eggs if present. This is a normal part of food safety as we could be referring to chicken or other meats.

The Institute in Italy can select safe snails of quality to send them to us, packaged and without other contaminants like plant material. It sends snails to many countries without issue.

As a biologist I am very aware of possible issues but we feel that in this case there is a strong argument for permitting the introduction of some quality *Cornu aspersum* snails into Tasmania in order to establish and grow what may be a significant future primary production industry.

Snails hibernate for months in cool climates and this is an important part of their life cycle.

As our seasons are opposite to the northern hemisphere we would be in a strong position to export as live snails are much superior to tinned, preserved snails.

We would be happy to breed the snails in Tasmania and distribute them to other growers if this is more secure.