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Decree proposal

by Kris Verduyckt, Sofie Joossen, Mien Van Olmen,
Mieke Claes, Hans Vanhoof, Gianna Werbrouck and Sofie Mertens

on the prohibition of the commercialisation
and manufacture of products
derived from kangaroos

EXPLANATORY NOTE



Vlaams Parlement

1.

See the [document file](#) at vlaamsparlement.be

General explanatory notes

The visit of an Aboriginals delegation to the Flemish and Brussels elected representatives on 22 October 2024 put the issue of the animal welfare of kangaroos back on the agenda. From a perspective of animal welfare there are major problems with Australian commercial hunting of kangaroos. This is because large numbers of animals are killed both in commercial hunting and in hunting for damage control. Government figures show that around 1.3 to 1.6 million kangaroos are shot commercially every year,¹ although it is obviously impossible to verify those figures exactly in the field.

These shootings are not illegal, because the Australian Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water sets an annual quota for commercial hunting that is even higher than those numbers.² The department justifies these quotas by referring to the large number of kangaroos and their impact on biodiversity. There is a lot of controversy about the annual quotas that are set on the basis of airborne monitoring and population estimates. Critics argue that the methods are inaccurate and tend to overestimate because they do not adequately for population losses due to climate, drought, diseases and habitat loss.³

The fact is that this is the largest slaughter of wild terrestrial animals in the world. A group of more than 80 international animal welfare organisations, academics and philosophers declared the commercial kangaroo hunt an animal welfare crisis in a statement in October.⁴ The unnecessary animal suffering caused by the killing of the animals is enormous. Chasing kangaroos takes place at night, which means that many shots do not lead to immediate death. According to studies, 40 percent of the animals die an unnecessarily painful and slow death as a result. Researchers from Cambridge University pointed out in a 2015 study already that current forms of commercial kangaroos hunting, together with inadequate controls, lead to methods that cause more injuries; they also expressed doubts about a humane implementation of these forms.⁵

In addition, about a third of killed kangaroos are female. They often have young, 'joeys' in Australian English, in their pile. They are considered economically worthless and are therefore killed or neglected en masse after their mothers have been killed. After all, hunters are often paid per kilogram of carcass, making it economically more interesting to kill strong and healthy kangaroos. Every year about 400,000 joeys die in this manner.

According to the Australian Code of Ethics for Killing Kangaroos, joeys without fur and

¹ Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, The Environment and Water (2024). 'Macropod quotas and harvest for commercial harvest in NSW, QLD, SA, VIC and WA - 2024'.

² New South Wales. Department of Environment and Heritage (2025). 'Understanding Kangaroo Management'.

³ Animal Justice Party (2025). 'Kangaroo Crisis'.

⁴ Kangaroos Alive (2024). 'A Global Declaration of the Kangaroo Welfare Crisis'.

⁵ Ben-Ami D, Boom K, Boronyak L, et al (2014). 'The welfare ethics of the commercial killing of free-ranging kangaroos: an evaluation of the benefits and costs of the industry'.

with eyes closed cannot experience pain.⁶ They must be killed by a neck fracture or beheading. Joeys that are partially or completely furred need to be removed from their mother's pouch by the hunters. Hunters must then hold the joeys by the hind legs and slam them against their vehicle to cause a deadly impact. A recent broadcast of the Dutch TV programme 'Keuringsdienst van Waarde' showed a report in which these hunting practices were very clear.⁷

Such methods and advice cause unnecessary animal suffering in the moments just before the kangaroos die. Animal rights organizations point out that it is also impossible for an average shooter to carry it out painlessly. Economically uninteresting young kangaroos who can already jump around are left to their own devices after their mother was killed. They die a slow death from starvation or dehydration after a long and stressful time.

These practices cannot be justified by the needs of lawful population management. Australian states such as Queensland and New South Wales have limited commercial kangaroo hunting due to the declining number of animals in some areas and the controversy over that hunting. Since the kangaroo hunt was commercialized in the state of Victoria, the number of kangaroos killed has increased by a factor of five.⁸

Flanders contributes disproportionately to this animal cruelty. Neither in the Flemish Region nor in Belgium as a whole are any official records kept on the import and processing of kangaroo meat. The Belgian statistical office (Statbel) groups kangaroo meat under the general category 'other animals', which makes it impossible to get a complete and accurate overview of the import, processing and consumption chain for that specific type of meat. However, it is clear that Flanders imports a significant number of kangaroo carcasses.⁹

Figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics from 2017 showed that our country alone accounted for 27 % of Australian meat exports. That means that our country has imported more than 632,389 kilos of kangaroo meat in one year, accounting for about 180,000 kangaroos. In an article by National Geographic in 2016, our country was even mentioned as the world's largest importer.¹⁰

This did not prevent several supermarket chains from stopping selling kangaroo meat in 2020. Major chains such as Delhaize, Colruyt, Aldi and Lidl have previously removed kangaroo meat from their offerings. Now Carrefour, Cora, Match and Spar will also stop selling them.¹¹ Nike and Puma also no longer use kangaroo leather in their products. Nevertheless, the meat is still processed in other ways, such as in pet food or as an export product to other countries. Other kangaroo products targeted by this proposed decree are high-end motor suits, sports shoes and firefighter's gloves.

In Flanders, a number of catering establishments offer the meat on their menu card. Also in the Flemish retail sector there are some specialized butchers who include kangaroo meat-based products in their product offering. Again, there is a lack of official data, but it may be assumed that this is a marginal segment of the hospitality and retail sectors.

The Aboriginal delegation called for a ban on the importation and commercialisation of kangaroo-derived products. There is broad support in Flanders for a ban on the marketing of these products. A Pureprofile poll from 2024 shows that 69 percent of

⁶ Agrifutures (2020). 'National Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos and Wallabies for Commercial Purposes'.

⁷ Keuringsdienst van Waarde (2025). 'Kangaroo Story'. Retrieved via: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHjW3oZL3c4>

⁸ Hylands (2023). 'Victorian Kangaroo Harvest Management Plan 2024-2028'.

⁹ The Brussels Times (2021). 'Belgium main EU importer of kangaroo meat after cruel hunting'.

¹⁰ National Geographic (2017). 'Australians hunt kangaroos commercially. Does it make sense?'

¹¹ VRT (2020). 'All large supermarkets in Belgium are discontinuing the sale of kangaroo meat.'

Flemish support the import ban for kangaroo meat. In addition, 78% believe the commercial killing of kangaroos is inhumane and 69% support a ban on the sale of kangaroo meat. Finally, 69 % consider that the Regions have a responsibility to take action to stop such cruel commercial hunting.

The position taken in the Flemish coalition agreement is that avoidable animal suffering must also be effectively avoided. In addition, it contains the following specific provision: "We ban the import of products from exotic animals when their production involves high levels of animal suffering."

In view of the large-scale animal suffering associated with the trade in kangaroo products and the disproportionately large role of Flanders in the aforementioned trade, a ban is imposed. With this proposed decree, the submitting members want to fulfil their responsibility towards the welfare of those animals by banning the import and sale of kangaroo meat, and by extension products derived from kangaroos, in Flanders. In this way, Flanders will contribute to improving the animal welfare of millions of kangaroos worldwide.

2. Explanations of the articles

Article 1

In accordance with Opinion No 67.713/1/V of the Council of State of 14 August 2020, it is the competence of the Regions to determine whether the prevention of animal suffering requires the import and transit of kangaroo products to be prohibited, within the limits of European Union law.

The proposed prohibition must therefore be regarded as a technical regulation within the meaning of Directive (EU) 2015/1535. Therefore, this proposed decree will be notified in advance to the European Commission, in accordance with the aforementioned Directive, in order to ensure compatibility with the rules of the internal market, and in particular the free movement of goods.

Article 2

With this ban, the submitting members of this proposed decree are targeting the entire family of Macropodidae. The greatest animal suffering occurs in the large-scale hunting of certain species of that family, such as the giant kangaroo, and is mainly located in Australia. Of course, there are also several other kangaroo species that are not actively hunted in other countries, such as Papua New Guinea. This proposed decree opts for a broad ban on products derived from all Macropodidae in order to prevent animal-unfriendly practices from shifting to other subfamilies or species, inside or outside Australia. Of course, products that would come from unregulated markets or illegal smuggling will also be targeted.

The term ‘manufacture’ refers to production and preparation for commercial purposes or for delivery to the consumer. This includes the method of preparation, packaging and labelling.

Commercialisation is to be understood as: importing, transporting for sale or delivery, holding for purposes of sale, offering, selling, distributing or marketing, or transferring with or without consideration. The ban therefore does not apply to the skin of the kangaroo or to derived products imported into Belgium for educational reasons (museums, zoos) or scientific reasons.

The situation of kangaroos, which are already protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), by Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97 of 9 December 1996 on the protection of species of wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein and by Regulation no. 865/2006 of the European Commission of 4 May 2006 laying down detailed rules concerning the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97 on the protection of species of wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein remains unchanged.

Article 3

Article 3 prohibits the manufacture and commercialisation of products made from kangaroo. The measure covers all parts or derivatives of the kangaroo, such as meat, skin and organs.

Article 4

Article 4 determines the penalty for violations of Article 3. A prison sentence as well as a fine may be imposed, or one of the two sentences may be imposed.

Article 5

Article 5 provides that the court may order the closure of an establishment for a specified period of time in the event of an offence under Article 3.

Article 6

Article 6 provides that the Decree shall enter into force on 1 July 2026. In this way, the entry into force of the decree coincides with the entry into force of a large number of other decrees and affected traders are given ample time to cease their activities.

Kris VERDUYCKT
Sofie JOOSEN
Mien VAN OLMEN
Mieke CLAES
Hans VANHOOF
Gianna
WERBROUCK
Sofie MERTENS

PROPOSED DECREE

Article 1. This Decree governs a matter of regional jurisdiction.

Article 2. For the purposes of this Decree, the following definitions shall apply:

1° kangaroo: any animal belonging to the Macropodidae family;

2° commercialisation: importing, transporting for sale or delivery, holding for purposes of sale, offering, selling, distributing, offering for sale, or transferring with or without consideration;

3° manufacture: preparation for marketing or delivery to the consumer, including method of preparation, packaging and labelling.

Article 3. It is forbidden to use kangaroos for the manufacture and commercialization of any product.

Article 4. Violations of Article 3 shall be punished with both imprisonment from eight days to five years and a fine from EUR 52 to EUR 100.000 or with either penalty. A finding of a violation shall be followed by confiscation of the material found, which shall be stored and destroyed for the account of the person concerned.

Article 5. In addition to the penalties referred to in Article 4, the court may close the establishment where the violations were committed, either for good or for a period of one to ten years.

Article 6. This Decree shall enter into force on 1 July 2026.

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Sofie JOOSEN
Mien VAN OLMEN
Mieke CLAES
Hans VANHOOF
Gianna
WERBROUCK
Sofie MERTENS