

# Rains create toad highway

■ Peter de Kruijff

Volunteers fighting the relentless march of the cane toad say one of the biggest wet seasons the Kimberley has seen could boost the pests' spread this year.

Kimberley Toad Busters board member Gary Rethus said record-breaking rains and flooding had provided the perfect opportunity for toads to spread in river and creek systems.

"Cane toads have been known to raft on flood-induced flotsam for hundreds of kilometres," he said.

At the end of last year, the KTB said pastoral stations and other community members had reported toads downstream on the Drysdale River, in the Mornington Wilderness Park, the Carson River and the Fitzroy River.

KTB co-founder Dean Goodgame said the KTB had two unconfirmed sightings of cane toads near the Wilhare Roadhouse.

"Once the flooding eases in the Fitzroy the amount of water that will still be lying around will ensure the cane toad will make it to Fitzroy Crossing this wet season," he said.

The KTB says toads could make it to Kalumburu this wet season.

Department of Parks and Wildlife Kimberley regional manager Daryl Moncrieff said the toads had not yet reached Kalumburu but were around the King George River, well beyond Halls Creek and probably around Mt



Tee Phillips, Kitana Callaghan, 9, and Thomas Ellis, 10, collect cane toads. Picture: Peter de Kruijff

Barnett Station on the Gibb River Road.

"They do like to move along corridors," he said.

"We've kind of given up trying to find a magic bullet to kill toads. Instead we're looking at preventing the effect of toads."

The department has developed taste-aversion sausages made from cane toads to be tested ahead of the species' frontline with at-risk native species such as the northern quoll and certain monitor lizards not yet affected by the pest.

The sausages give native animals that ingest them a sick stomach to ward them off eating actual cane toads, which is often fatal.

Mr Moncrieff said if the trial of the sausages in the wild was successful, they could potentially be dropped from planes as the department does for fox baiting in the south of the state.

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