

# Wild dogs

*Canis familiaris*



The term wild dog refers collectively to purebred dingoes, dingo hybrids and domestic dogs that have escaped or been deliberately released.

Early management strategies focused on eradication of wild dogs. The effectiveness of control campaigns was usually based on circumstantial evidence.

The development of radio-tracking technology provided the opportunity to study wild dog movement and allowed better assessment of the effectiveness of control operations.

Wild dog control methods include trapping, shooting, fencing, poisoning and the use of guard dogs to protect valuable stock. A planned strategy using a combination of these methods that also considers wild dog behaviour will enable effective management of the population.

## Declaration details

Wild dogs are declared animals under the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002*. As such, all land owners in Queensland are required to reduce the number of wild dogs on their properties.

## Control

### Shooting

Shooting is an opportunistic method, mostly used for control of small populations or individual problem animals.

### Trapping

Trapping is time-consuming and labour-intensive. The success of trapping (using leg hold traps and snares) depends on the skill of the operator. Trapping is predominantly used in areas with low populations and to control 'problem' wild dogs.

Trapping by inexperienced operators may prove detrimental if a wild dog is exposed to a carelessly prepared and presented trap, and subsequently escapes. Such animals may become 'trap shy', or maimed to such a degree that they can prey only on more easily caught domestic stock.

For humane reasons and to prevent escape, poisoning traps with strychnine is recommended to quickly kill captured animals.

A mixture of dog faeces and urine is a popular lure used by trappers. Attractiveness of lures varies with seasons and locations. No single lure has yet been found that is consistently attractive to wild dogs.

Traps are best placed on the wild dog boundary pad. Here the wild dog is most likely to find and investigate the decoy/odour.

Wild dog scent posts can be found by walking with a domestic dog on a lead along a known pad. Trap placement in relation to the scent post can be optimised by observing the dog's behaviour as it approaches. Factors to consider are:

- where on the bush it smells
- placement of feet while urinating/defecating
- how it approaches and where it scratches in relation to the pad and scent post.

Traps are not target-specific and should therefore be set in situations that are less likely to catch other animals. Avoid setting traps close to waterholes.

Padded jaw traps are recommended—these are more humane than steel leg-hold traps.



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## Fencing

Fencing suitable to exclude wild dogs is expensive to build and requires continual maintenance to repair damage caused by fallen timber, floods and animals. However, a properly maintained fence can restrict movement back into an area where wild dogs have been controlled.

Electric fences suitable for wild dogs have been developed. Electrifying a fence creates a fear of the fence itself and deters wild dogs from approaching.

For fencing to be successful, it must be possible to eliminate wild dogs from within the fence. The fence must be maintained in good order and occasional mopping-up measures employed to remove intruding animals.

## Livestock guardian dogs

Livestock guardian dogs have been used to protect livestock from predators in Europe, Asia and America. Some producers in Queensland's south-east have decreased predation on sheep and goats using this method. However, it is less successful on larger holdings where stock are more widely scattered. The use of trapping and poisoning in conjunction with guardian dogs is not recommended.

## Poisoning

Baits poisoned with 1080 are the most economic, efficient, humane and effective method of controlling wild dogs, especially in inaccessible or extensive areas. Baits can be laid quickly in large numbers by hand, from vehicles and from aircraft.

Currently there are two poisons legally available for wild dog control. These are 1080 (sodium monofluoroacetate) and strychnine.

A Queensland Health permit is necessary to purchase strychnine. The 1080 poison can be obtained only through licensed Biosecurity Queensland officers and local government operators.

The use of poison baits will control the majority of wild dogs. Problem animals that avoid baits can then be trapped, shot or fenced-out to provide additional control.

Baits may be selectively positioned to avoid killing non-target species, as wild dogs' keen sense of smell enables them to find baits intentionally buried in sand or otherwise hidden. Baits may also be tied to prevent their loss to non-target species.

These bait placement techniques help to:

- reduce the risk of poisoning non-target species
- minimise bait removal by non-target scavengers
- keep the bait moist (longer palatability)
- deter ants (ant-covered baits are believed to be less attractive to dingoes).

Allow a full month for the major effects of baiting to be realised. Heavy rain within two weeks of baiting can leach 1080 from the bait.

## Management strategies

It is generally accepted that wild dogs are in fewer numbers statewide due to the use of 1080 over the past three decades.

To increase baiting effectiveness and the duration of low wild dog numbers, it is essential that baiting programs be coordinated among adjoining properties. Baiting individual properties may result in reduced wild dog numbers in the short term, but the benefits of this will be short-lived due to rapid re-invasion.

Research has shown that recolonising wild dog populations are more prone to attack livestock than uncontrolled wild dog populations. Thus, livestock producers should aim to create a wild dog-free buffer of 10–15 km around grazing areas by regular baiting.

The principal source of re-colonising populations comes from immigration, not increased birth rate of remaining wild dogs.

The timing of control should consider seasonal variations in the availability of water (where water is restricted) and then target watering points. The phase of the biological cycle could also influence the likelihood of wild dogs coming into contact with baits and should be considered. Many graziers bait twice a year to target adults during peaks in activity associated with breeding (April/May) and then again in August/September to target pups and juveniles.

A suggested practice is to lay baits in the cooler months when birds and goannas are less active and wild dogs more active.

## Further information

Further information is available from your local government office, or by contacting Biosecurity Queensland (call 13 25 23 or visit our website at [www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au)).

Fact sheets are available from Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) service centres and our Business Information Centre (telephone 13 25 23). Check our website at [www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au) to ensure you have the latest version of this fact sheet. The control methods referred to in this fact sheet should be used in accordance with the restrictions (federal and state legislation, and local government laws) directly or indirectly related to each control method. These restrictions may prevent the use of one or more of the methods referred to, depending on individual circumstances. While every care is taken to ensure the accuracy of this information, DEEDI does not invite reliance upon it, nor accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by actions based on it.