

My wife and I are farming in the Gilmore Valley south of Tumut NSW as have several generations of my family beforehand. On our eastern boundary we neighbour Bago State Forest which adjoins Kosziouko National Park, both significant breeders and feeders of pest animals. Over the years our families have had to deal with rabbits, foxes, kangaroos, pigs and wombats, but the pest having the most effect on our lives and livelihoods is the wild dog. For the first eight months of 2015 I have put our financial losses at a conservative \$84,000. This has arisen from wild dogs coming out of Bago and killing ewes and lambs and forcing us to retreat from 100 hectares of high rainfall heavy carrying capacity paddocks. This withdrawal saw us then become heavily stocked on our remaining pastures. We had to purchase lucerne hay to feed lambing ewes, use our own fodder reserves not budgeted for, significantly more labour accumulated, continually checking our stock for dog attacks, missed market opportunities, mounting worm burdens, culminating in the early sale of 64 Angus yearlings that were to be grown out to heavy steers for a far greater financial return.

The Gilmore Valley has seen a reduction in sheep numbers of about 18,000 since Forestry took over the Blowering Dam area in the 1960's. Today there are at least 15 landholders that are concerned about wild dogs and can't manage their land and stock how they wish to. It is extremely distressing to see your animals mauled and killed by wild dogs.

This reduction in sheep numbers and land that isn't utilised to its potential, is seeing millions of dollars lost in earnings and opportunities in Gilmore. These losses are multiplied in a large number of other areas throughout Australia quickly adding to billions lost from communities and the country.

We have a wild dog plan in the area (East Gilmore Wild Dog Plan) which is expected to do extraordinary things for its small budget. It appears that Forestry and Parks have been relying on this wild dog plan to do the majority of their wild dog work for them when in fact the area covered by this plan is minuscule compared to their respective land masses.

Both Parks and Forestry are rate exempt, tens of millions of dollars this amounts to. Other rate payers are slugged more to make up this shortfall. In lieu of not paying rates these organisations are obligated to control pests, weeds and fires, or so we are told. Go for a look around them or ask neighbours and it is obvious most work done is window dressing.

Another serious issue that concerns wild dog affected landholders and myself is that of staff in Government agencies. Some of the staff in these offices are extremely arrogant, disrespectful, deceitful and use bullying tactics to get the result they desire. It seems to be "normal" practice for quite a few. With attitudes of "a dead [redacted] sheep, so what" coming out of Parks and "wild dogs don't kill pine trees" from Forestry, it appears we have a long way to go.

Also apparent is how far backwards we have gone since the creation of the LLS. Funding issues are always surrounding this organisation and deception seems rampant. We have two wild dog meetings a year in Gilmore with the attendees asking several occasions to see a report on the financials for our wild dog plan, only to be deceived and fobbed off.

When funding is made available to control pests we have that many layers of bureaucracy most of the money is siphoned off before it gets on the ground to control the pest. Researchers, Facilitators, Rangers and other bureaucrats taking the majority of it, creating lucrative jobs for themselves.

Legislation has been in place since 1998 to contain and control wild dogs in Schedule 11 land, all other land is Schedule 1, so dogs are trespassing. For years Forestry has been using an interpretation which has seen their organisation do no control work at all in the heart of Bago. This has seen wild dog numbers explode and they end up moving onto farm land. The [REDACTED] laughed at a recent wild dog meeting that the legislation was hard to understand. Little comfort to dog affected landholders. [REDACTED] put our wild dog plan together eight years ago. I believe adjacent to schedule 11 land we are eligible for a fully negotiated and well resourced "community wild dog management plan" not something one agency staff member dreamed up with little or no wild dog experience and inadequately resourced for the task. We feel duped.

Successive governments have increased the amount of land turned into parks, sanctuaries etc to win the "green" vote. However sufficient finances are never made available to control the pests or weeds. Therefore they end up overrun with wild dogs, foxes, blackberries St. John's Wort, etc the same as other public lands, with government seemingly expecting neighbouring landholders to do the pest and weed control for them.

If governments, water boards, tourism, "greens" and academics desire wild dogs in public lands, then find the money to control and contain, from their budgets. We are fed up with paying rates, taxes and levies over and over yet still expected to do the Governments pest and weed work for them.

We as landholders have to contend with all of this from an insidious problem that has not been created by farming families. Wild dog affected stock owners just want to get on with their lives like everyone else.

Yours sincerely

John Callaway

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