

## **Background**

I run a small merino sheep farm at [REDACTED] which I purchased in 2013. Wild dogs are a constant threat to my sheep. My fencing entails hinge joint, barbed wire and electric fencing. I also run alpacas and a companion dog to deter the wild dogs.

The worst experience was when I lost 40% of my flock in one week due to wild dog attacks.

I am regularly told by government employees that one cannot run sheep at Bulahdelah because of the dog problem. It is almost like people feel that the sheep cause the dog problem.

We are now at a stage where the dogs are so bad at Bulahdelah that they are taking down fully grown cattle. I believe there were four cattle killed in one night by wild dogs recently at Coolonglook. I also know of people that have been approached and stalked by wild dogs.

## **Personal Issues I face**

The pest animal that concerns me most is wild dogs.

I have a hard time getting government agencies to take wild dog control seriously. I have had extensive problems with National Parks where I have established that they fabricate information and inflate their data to make their reports look impressive, but this does nothing for relieving the wild dog problems.

The local landholders are frustrated to the point where they no longer bother to fight the wild dogs as they feel it is hopeless and purely redundant as National Parks are harbouring the pest animal and refusing to do anything about it.

It is believed that pest animals cannot be eradicated. This attitude needs to stop as I don't believe that this has ever been truly attempted. My farm is surrounded by Myall river and the Pacific Hwy which only leaves the southern boundary vulnerable to wild dogs. Unfortunately, National Parks is south of my farm and even though every other neighbour, including Great Lakes Council is proactive in wild dog control, National Parks does nothing of substance.

I managed to remove all dogs in the area, but without National Parks' assistance, it was never going to be long term. National Parks is currently the biggest personal issue I face in my pest animal management.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

I do not believe that the roles and responsibilities are clear on any level. Whenever I contact the National Parks Pest Control they are either burning or planning for a burn or busy with weed control. I have gone as high as the Regional Manager for Pest Control and asked for some assistance. I am still waiting eight weeks later.

## **Roles and Responsibilities (Continued)**

I believe that there should be one department governing all the government agencies and landholders, specifically set up for pest management, hopefully with a vested interest in the removal the pest animals. They should not be concerned with bushfire control and weed management and their job should depend on the extinction of pest animals, not obtaining a pre-specified kill figure each year. This governing body would be able to force National Parks or whoever to remove all their pest animals.

Accountability can be obtained by ensuring the person/s have a vested interest in the eradication of pest animals. Make farmers the governing agency!

When I lost 40% of my flock in the early days, I rallied the adjoining landholders and we all hired a highly respected dog trapper. Because we were all using the same person, he was able to have access to the entire area and in a matter of weeks all but one wild dog was killed. Unfortunately, National Parks refused to be involved in this program and the wild dogs bred up on their land and we now have four dogs in the area.

A concerted joint effort will work, but all parties need to be proactive and genuine. National Parks keeps telling everyone that they are 'on board' but never actually do anything of substance. Their reports look fabulous, but their real results are pathetic.

## **Shared Ownership**

I have not had a problem with getting Local Land Services or Council or local landholders to sincerely participate in a joint wild dog program. The only issue I have had is with National Parks refusing to be genuinely involved.

This year, south of National Parks did a huge baiting and trapping program. The landholder's north of National Parks did a joint program using the same dog trapper. I personally contacted National Parks and explained our program and asked them to participate. David Bearup from National Parks declined to be involved as he said there was no funding available to pay the \$2,200 for the two week program.

After some heavy pressure from myself, I managed to get National Parks to agree to an in house baiting program as their contribution to the joint program they said they were keen to participate in. I was later informed by David Bearup that National Parks put out a total of two (2) baits in their entire park east of the Pacific Highway.

I do not believe this to be anything other than a slap in the face to the local landholders and certainly not a sincere or genuine effort at wild dog control. But the absolute number one insult is when National Parks claimed the two dogs trapped by our dog trapper (who they refused to pay for) as part of National Parks success.

I believe that local landholders will be more proactive at pest management if National Parks are forced to be involved. In our area, National Parks does not see the benefit in wild dog removal and without a consolidated participation, then individual efforts are futile. I was

### **Shared Ownership (Continued)**

actually told by National Parks Area Manager Stephen Smith that they do not have to do wild dog control unless I have had immediate stock losses.

Communities understand the devastation that pest animals cause. It is government paid employees that do not, as they are not affected by pest animals. Government employees still get their pay cheque whether the pests are there or not. I believe a pay cut of 10% from National Parks employees for every dog sighted would successfully eradicate wild dogs!

Perhaps dog proof National Parks to ensure the dogs do not come out. This should not create any trouble for National Parks as I am constantly told there is no dogs in there. So let us install the fencing and then there will be no need to incorporate National Parks in any program.

### **Priority pest species**

I believe wild dog eradication should be the main focus. Whilst there is no doubt that pigs, rabbits, horses etc do massive amounts of damage, there is no other species that is more dangerous to humans than wild dogs. We have had numerous incidents where adults have been bailed up by wild dogs. If wild dogs are taking down fully grown cattle, then it is not long before humans are going to be attacked regularly.

I also believe that wild dogs are the most expensive for agriculture with massive stock losses, costly control programs and time management issues.

I also believe that a concerted effort into the eradication of one animal at a time is imperative and practical. A split focus is never productive.

### **Landscape approach**

Appointing one person/s to oversee and ensure strategic and coordinated planning solely for pest management will ensure that there is an improvement between departments, landholders and natural systems.

I think a coordinated approach to eradicate one species at a time would be a much better use of resources, ensuring a completely focused and intensive program. And I don't think that pest plants be considered in pest management programs.

Social aspects are not an issue as the farmers and landholders are already educated on the effects of pest animals. They constantly see their dead animals and know how much it costs. It is the government departments that need to be educated and agreeable before being put in positions of power.

Reliability of data is imperative. My local National Parks inflate and exaggerate their wild dog culls, even claim culls which have nothing to do with them. In addition, they import irrelevant data into their reports to embellish specific areas. I am constantly asking for

### **Landscape approach (Continued)**

information relating to the wild dog program east of the Pacific Highway at Bulahdelah which is the concern for my farm. The response from National Parks is always to incorporate work carried out west of the Pacific Highway as there is virtually no baiting or trapping program east of the Pacific Highway and they do not want to release figures that state this. National Parks has to date refused to increase any trapping or baiting program east of the Pacific highway despite my continual request to do so.

If an independent body was overseeing the entire pest control program, then that independent body would be able to ascertain the funding was allocated for the appropriate program. Moreover, the independent body would insist that the funding be used for only pest control, not burning or weed control. And they would have access to all land areas. I see this as very important to establish what is necessary to successfully eradicate wild dogs.

I would also like to see transparency in government allocation to pest management. Why was National Parks not able to spare \$2,200 on a wild dog program? What amount of their budget is put aside for wild dog control? How were the costs utilised as all wild dog control seem to be done in house? These questions need to be clarified and quickly.

### **Emerging Issues**

I see the number one emerging issue being wild dog attacks on humans. This has already occurred in areas such as Williamstown etc. I believe that this will only increase if we don't remove the wild dogs. It has been established that wild dogs, sometimes in packs, roam through towns and suburban areas. It will not be long before the human population is under threat from these animals.

I do not believe that there is a need for more research. There is quite sufficient research into effective wild dog control. An intensive and effective eradication system needs to be implemented and swiftly, before humans start to get ripped open like my sheep are.

### **Adequate resourcing**

I believe that a higher level of accountability and transparency needs to be available for all funding, especially National Parks. I have no confidence in National Parks data or allocation of funding. My experience is that National Parks does not spend one cent on wild dog control other than wages. I would be very interested to know how much funding is actually received for wild dog control.

My National Parks refuse to do more than one program per year and that program is completely inadequate. The timing of the program is such that it cannot be effective. For instance, National Parks insist that they do not lay out traps until July/August. This is the period where the bitches have already given birth to pups. And yes, the trapping program is usually successful with a number of dogs caught, but these are usually just the pups. If the

### **Adequate resourcing (Continued)**

trapping program was moved to say May or June before the bitches have the pups, then that is more likely to catch the bitches, preventing the pups from being born or surviving. It is not rocket science!

National Parks is fully aware of this, but trapping in July/August achieves better figures on their reports with very little effort, so why would they change.

### **Knowledge Building**

The biggest barrier to effective implementation of pest control is attitude. The people paid to implement the programs have to want to implement the program. The Area Manager at my National Parks has made it extremely clear that he does not want to concern himself with wild dog control, even though that is what he is paid to do. I can see no way of working with this attitude. It is my understanding that this attitude is entrenched throughout a lot of the National Parks.

People in the Bulahdelah area have been imploring National Parks to undertake wild dog programs for over 7 years, and yet still the Area Manager does not want to authorise it. I understand that the park rangers, men on the ground etc would love to undertake regular wild dog control but are ordered not to do so by senior staff.

I don't think any further research needs to be done. I don't believe that any further accreditation needs to be undertaken. I think it is time for action and the removal of bad attitudes.

### **In Summary**

I would just like to say that it is horrifying to lose any animal to dog attacks, let alone the numbers that I have. I am fully aware of where the dogs are and I am unable to kill them.

Whilst I do everything in my power to keep the dogs from coming onto my property, I believe more needs to be done to eradicate the dogs to begin with.

Firstly, lets us start to acknowledge that wild dogs can actually be eradicated, not controlled. There is no reason with an efficient and ongoing programs why wild dogs cannot be completely wiped out. For those naysayers, please show me where this has actually been attempted before ruling it out.

Secondly, a sincere concerted effort needs to be adopted by the entire area, be it landholders, council, national parks etc. Only proactive attitudes to wild dog control should be permitted to make decisions. Thirdly, a monitoring and preventative program needs to be implemented and maintained.

Lastly, I think that if this is not undertaken soon then I foresee human lives will be lost from wild dog attacks.