

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Date Received: 2 June 2026

Co-existing with dingoes on the forest edge

I'm a cattle farmer in north east Victoria, with a state forest on two boundaries and the Alpine National Park only a couple of kilometres away.

We've learned that the dingoes are best left alone. In ten years we've had no stock losses and there are very few in the valley. This is partly because it's mainly a cattle area - dingoes don't really predate on cattle - but also because stable pack structure means discipline and order. We've found that the only issues come when alpha dogs are killed, and the pack structure breaks down - then we get problems with dingoes coming onto farmland and harassing stock. Since our local parks office stopped poisoning we have had few issues with disruption to packs, and the dingoes stay in the forest, where we hear them but seldom see them.

For the farmers that run sheep or goats, I know it is difficult and they need very good fences and livestock guardian dogs to protect stock. And if farmers can resist the urge to shoot every dog, the stable pack structure will return and there will be less problems.

Why go to the trouble of looking after the dingo? It's well established that having an apex predator in the environment has a lot of benefits. In many ways it is critical - whether for controlling deer, pigs, cats, foxes and kangaroos - or their spiritual and cultural value to the First Nations peoples.

We see first hand there are no cats or foxes, nor pigs, on our farm or in the forest nearby. Deer are here but their numbers are somewhat affected by dingoes taking the fawns. Unfortunately for deer it seems we need a bigger predator.

I'd encourage all the farmers out there to think about changing the way they farm to fit in with the environment, rather than simply shooting / bulldozing / poisoning their way through any inconvenience (like the dingo), colonial style. The dingoes are doing vastly more good than harm, and we all need to learn to live with them and appreciate them for what they do.

Unfortunately the dingo has become the target of culture wars and much emotion, and it is hard to have a reasonable conversation about them. I hope that this enquiry can provide an evidence based approach to protecting dingoes in national parks and more broadly in all the landscapes and ecosystems across New South Wales.