

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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To Whom It May Concern,

We own a 1,000-acre property located approximately 15 kilometres from Tenterfield. Our property's main neighbouring landholder on the south-eastern boundary is the National Park. We primarily operate a sheep enterprise, running approximately 500 head of sheep and 60 head of cattle.

We work closely with National Parks to do everything we can to control feral animals, particularly feral dogs. Historically, we have only experienced dog attacks every five years or so. However, as dingoes have increasingly bred with domestic dogs, producing larger litters, we have experienced a significant increase in feral dog activity.

Since 2023, we have had numerous sightings of young pups. Although they were too young at the time to cause significant damage, we still implemented control measures as a precaution. As these dogs have matured, they have been hunting throughout the National Park, feeding on feral goats. Over the past nine years, we have observed a dramatic decline in feral goat numbers. They also prey on native wildlife, including kangaroos and lyrebirds, contributing to declining populations of these species.

In March this year, we experienced a serious dog attack over a two-month period, during which approximately 30 of our Merino sheep were mauled and died. Throughout this period, we used trail cameras and thermal scopes to identify a total of five dogs that were regularly travelling from the National Park onto our property in search of food.

We are confident these dogs originated from the National Park, as we followed their tracks back across the boundary. After implementing our control measures, including trapping, we successfully trapped two dogs near the National Park boundary with the assistance of National Parks' trapper. We also undertook a baiting program, which successfully removed the remaining dogs responsible for the attacks.

These dogs were crossbred with domestic dogs and appeared to be less experienced hunters than pure dingoes. Rather than quickly killing livestock, they appeared to chase and maul the sheep, causing prolonged and unnecessary suffering. Many animals died slowly from blood loss or infection. Others survived the initial attack but suffered horrific injuries. We found numerous sheep still attempting to walk despite having severe bite wounds to their legs. In several cases, the dogs had chewed through the flesh to the bone, leaving the sheep in extreme pain and unable to recover. These injuries were far beyond treatment, and we were forced to humanely euthanise the animals to prevent any further suffering. Witnessing animals in this condition is extremely distressing and highlights the unnecessary cruelty caused by these attacks.

This behaviour is not only cruel to livestock but also to native wildlife. On one occasion, we witnessed the dogs chase a kangaroo into a dam where it became trapped, making it an easy target. This was an extremely distressing and unnecessary death for the animal. We have also observed ongoing predation of native wildlife, including kangaroos and lyrebirds, which we believe is contributing to declining populations in our local area.

The impacts of feral dog attacks extend well beyond our own property. Several neighbouring landholders have experienced repeated attacks over many years, suffering continual stock losses despite implementing their own control measures. In some cases, these repeated attacks have become so severe that neighbouring properties have been forced to stop running sheep altogether because the financial losses and ongoing animal welfare concerns made the enterprise no longer viable. This demonstrates that the feral dog problem is not isolated to our property but is affecting the wider farming community throughout the district.

The assistance provided by National Parks through coordinated trapping and baiting programs has been invaluable in reducing feral dog numbers and limiting the unnecessary suffering they cause to both livestock and native wildlife. Working together has proven to be one of the most effective ways of protecting agricultural enterprises while also helping to conserve native wildlife.

In conclusion, the feral dogs breeding within and moving out of the National Park are causing significant and unnecessary harm to both agricultural livestock and native wildlife. Their impact has contributed to declining native animal populations and substantial losses to our sheep enterprise, directly affecting our annual income. Continued support for coordinated baiting and trapping programs is essential to reducing feral dog numbers, improving animal welfare, protecting native wildlife, and ensuring the long-term viability of sheep farming in our region.

Thank you for considering our submission.