

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Clarence Valley Farmers

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Submission to the inquiry into Dingoes in national parks in New South Wales

We represent various farmers in the Clarence Valley region of NSW. We are writing to make a submission to the inquiry into Dingoes in national parks in New South Wales. The inquiry is examining the management, ecological role, genetic status and legislative framework relating to dingoes in NSW national parks.

Clarence Valley farmers strongly oppose any changes to the classification of dingoes in National Parks or legislative changes that would lead to an increase in dingo numbers in neighbouring lands. Our view is that dingoes should continue to be actively managed within and around national parks to protect livestock, biodiversity, and public safety.

Key concerns

Dingoes are not always a true native species

There remains debate regarding the origin and status of dingoes in Australia. Regardless of their historical status, modern wild dog populations are frequently mixed with domestic dogs through cross-breeding, creating hybrid animals that are difficult to distinguish and manage.

Dingoes are not a true native animal, like koalas or wallabies.

Hybridisation threatens both livestock and pure dingoes

Cross-breeding between dingoes and domestic dogs is widespread. Effective management is necessary to reduce hybridisation and preserve any remaining genetically pure dingo populations.

Clarence Valley farmers have observed members of the public dumping domestic dogs in the bush near National Parks, further contributing to cross-breeding.

Livestock losses remain significant

Wild dogs cause substantial losses to sheep and cattle producers, as well as producers of other livestock and poultry, with estimates that wild dogs cost Australia's agricultural sector \$302 million per year, primarily due to stock losses. Producers adjoining national parks often carry the burden of predation while the source populations remain protected within parks. Landholders should not bear the full cost and risk of managing animals originating from public land.

Clarence Valley farmers request the government to provide insurance against increased stock losses due to increases in dingo numbers if there is a reclassification and protection of dingoes/ wild dogs.

Exclusion fencing is expensive

Exclusion fencing is an important management tool, but is extremely costly to establish and maintain. If governments wish to protect dingoes within national parks, governments should be required to construct exclusion fencing, clearing of fence lines to protect against bushfires and ongoing maintenance to keep dingos contained within national park boundaries and not causing destruction on neighbouring land.

An exclusion fence would help to protect the genetic status of dingoes. It would also protect dingoes from getting distemper, pavo and other diseases carried by feral dogs. Without exclusion fencing, dingoes have been observed to follow fire trails into private property, contributing to stock losses among other issues.

However, an exclusion fence would not help to protect other native wildlife when fires and dingoes push these native animals into the fence as koalas and other native wildlife now come into private property for protection.

Disease and biosecurity risks

Uncontrolled wild dog populations can spread diseases and parasites (including hidatus) that threaten livestock, domestic animals and wildlife. Effective population management is an important component of Australia's biosecurity system.

Dingoes are currently classified as a pest animal and all landholders, both public and private, have a responsibility to control them.

Dingoes contributed to the mainland extinction of the Tasmania Tiger. Qld research has observed dingoes predating koalas, while Clarence Valley farmers have observed dingoes at the base of trees waiting for koalas to come down. Clarence Valley farmers have observed greatly reduced numbers wallabies and native animals in areas that dingoes are not controlled. In this case, what is the conservation land actually protecting if dingoes are allowed to multiply?

Public safety

Wild dogs are intelligent and adaptable animals that readily travel long distances. They can become habituated to people, particularly where food is available, increasing the risk of human interactions in parks and nearby communities. The recent events at Frazer Island and historically at Ayres Rock are evidence that dingoes are a significant threat to public safety.

Management tools should remain available

Current control methods, including trapping, coordinated baiting where appropriate, exclusion fencing and other recognised management techniques, should remain available. Restricting these tools would reduce the ability of landholders and government agencies to manage wild dog impacts effectively.

There is concern among Clarence Valley farmers that in the future, landholders may not be able to use 1080 baits adjoining National Parks or beyond.

Recommendations

We recommend that the NSW Government:

- Continue active wild dog management within and adjacent to national parks.
- Maintain access to all effective control methods where justified.
- Construct and maintain exclusion fencing around national parks if dingoes become protected.
- Recognise the impacts of wild dogs on livestock production, rural communities and biosecurity.
- Continue research into the genetic status of dingoes and hybrids before expanding legal protections.
- Ensure any conservation measures balance biodiversity objectives with the needs of farming communities, ratepayers and public safety.

Conclusion

While dingoes may have ecological value in some environments, their management must also recognise the significant impacts they have on agriculture, neighbouring landholders, biosecurity and community safety. Conservation should not come at the expense of rural livelihoods. Active, science-based management remains the most practical approach for NSW national parks.