

**INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW
SOUTH WALES**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Dingo Management

I would like to submit some points for consideration for the Inquiry to consider.

We live on the edge of the north-east of Wollemi National Park, in Martindale. We are a small grazing property with limited cropping area for our own cattle feed. Large tracts of our land is native bushland, which is grazed on a rotational basis. Our family are 6th and 7th generations in this area from settlement. We choose not to run sheep mainly because this is not good sheep country as it impacts the land too much here, although previous generations did run sheep in a mixed operation.

We coexist with resident dingoes, on an around our land in the neighbouring Wollemi NP. We regularly place trail cameras around our farm and have much footage of the animals mentioned below.

We find the dingoes are highly respectful of our stock and have never had a loss that was caused by dingo predation. We do have trail camera footage of dingoes scavenging on carcasses of our stock after death from other causes. We also have trail cam footage of dingoes in their natural habitat going about their lives.

We are also in a hotspot for the Brush-tailed rock-wallaby (BTRW). Recently in a similar area to where we are regularly seeing dingoes on trail cameras we also counted 13 BTRWs sitting on rocks in an area less than 200m in distance as we travelled along a farm track. Dingoes are a recognised protective factor for BTRW. Dingoes are known to aid in management of feral foxes and feral cats. While there is debate about their native status and time since their arrival, they have been resident in Australia long enough to be in the position of apex predator and have a necessary role in the ecosystem.

We do not continually bait. We do manage foxes and cats whenever we can. Other properties in the neighbourhood where they almost continually bait have noted a decline in their BTRW population, but we and other neighbours who do not bait ourselves have healthy and increasing populations.

We are also home to multiple species of other macropods, including Eastern grey kangaroos, Euro/Common wallaroo and Red-necked wallabies.

I mentioned we have limited land for cropping, solely used for on-farm strip grazing and hay production for our own use. These larger macropods impact our feed and hay production to an enormous extent, even to the total loss of any production for stock. We have many times bought seed, sown crops, fertilised and watered the crops only to have the macropods totally graze the entire crop with no growth available for our cattle. We currently have a paddock of grazing wheat in that is almost like a lawn and the macropods are there during the daytime as well as in more numerous numbers at night. The pressure is not recognised in the usual discussion around managing "wild dogs", yet it is a huge loss both financially, mentally and timewise for us, pushing our grazing capacity to the lowest limits of viability. We have just had to purchase in hay this week for our stock as we have had too much loss from the macropod grazing pressure. We certainly consider these native herbivores as vertebrate pests. There seems to be limited recognition of this, though, and we just need to cope. We have not sought permits for culling so far, rather have reduced our stock carrying. We would much rather the natural processes be left in place and maintain a balance.

When no regular baiting takes place and a full and healthy and stable population of dingoes are present across the region they put pressure on the macropods, and we have much lower losses of our cropping/grazing paddocks. We ourselves have lodged letters of objection to baiting, aerial or ground, with NPWS and are apparently provided a 1km+ buffer. We have, however, over the years found baits and animals dead from bating on our land. Despite their baiting, foxes locally seem to be increasing in number. Foxes seen on our property, while driving down the road, and mentioned anecdotally by neighbours seem to be present in larger numbers. Many neighbours as well as ourselves have had chooks taken by foxes this year. In fact, a fox was just chased off from here by me and my pet guinea fowl (utilised as guardian animals for this purpose) this morning from my chook pen, I saw it from my kitchen window. I could not possibly bait this close to my farm dogs even if I chose to. I can set a trap and will do that tonight, though.

We have also lost farm dogs to baits. This year, given that our buffer is outside the legal distance for notification, we were not notified of the baiting program (we usually would have been) and found a dead fox within 200m of our houses and thus put at risk our farm dogs again, without us knowing to take precautions. An animal dying of a bait is a distressingly awful thing to witness. I have done so and do not recommend it for your mental health, be it a working farm dog, loved family pet or wild animal.

No animal, however problematic, should be subjected to such a cruel death.

What are the solutions?

Stock managers and landowners need to care for their stock. This is recognised. It is also recognised that dingoes can predate on smaller animals such as sheep and goats, and in some cases cattle (anecdotally, although not in our experience). Improvements in husbandry methods and employing aids such as livestock guardian animals and better exclusionary fencing are all methods that can be utilised. Leaving the family structure of the dingo intact leads to fewer losses, studies and on-ground experience has shown.

Managing feral domestic dogs in the urban fringe and around towns is also a key need. I have personally, as a young girl and as an adult when living in town, seen domestic dogs, individually or in packs, attack both people and livestock. This is frightening and seems to be done "for fun".

Recognising the losses from native herbivore pressure is also required. It seems in our experience that the loudest voices are those pursuing extermination of "wild dogs", yet few to no voices are recognising the very great financial and mental losses from the overgrazing by native animals, leading to greater reduced carrying capacity and potentially making farming unviable for people such as us. For us personally, we now run 18-20 head of cattle (plus calves), and are struggling in the changing climate, with increasing floods and flash drought (currently in a green drought) more frequently impacting our ability to maintain natural stock feed. Historically, this was up to 100 head. That is a huge loss in production and financial return, and the greatest impact outside changing climate is vertebrate pest herbivory from native macropods. We now all work off-farm, three adults full time and me part-time (two households).

1080 is often justified as a naturally occurring toxin in our native plants, so native animals are assumed to have tolerances for it. Given that it is used most often on animals that are carnivores that do not eat plants (or omnivores, e.g. feral pigs); and given that the plants that contain a similar chemical toxin - not the same as the synthesised form called 1080 - are more predominantly found in WA and not here in NSW, this toxin in our environment is not natural.

Please seriously consider changing laws around protections of the native apex predator, the dingo.

Please consider the cascade of issues that come from removing this apex predator from our environment.

Please consider the utter cruelty of the use of 1080.

We would be happy to answer questions from the Inquiry into our experiences as discussed above.

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