

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on this very important matter.

My name is Noel Whitem. I am qualified with the Bachelor of Natural Resources (UNE) and previously worked in the field of land management and planning with the Department of Lands and the NSW Department of Land and Water Conservation (DLWC) for 23 years. I am now retired.

1. Genetic Status of the Dingo

- Recent DNA research (Kylie Cairns et al) have proved that is a separate entity to the domestic dog and there is little cross breeding or hybridisation between the two groups.
- The term 'wild dog' needs to be abolished immediately based upon this new " and knowledge
- Dingos should now be formally referred to as 'dingo' with all other roaming dogs referred to as 'feral dogs' in recognition of this important genetic distinction.

2. Ecological Significance of the Dingo

- The Dingo has an accepted role as an apex predator that plays a crucial role in the environment in controlling kangaroos and wallabies, thereby reducing grazing pressures in open paddocks, and controlling pest animals including foxes, cats, rabbits, pigs and probably, feral deer populations across the landscape. Just the presence of the Dingo, irrespective of its direct predation, will prevent cats and foxes from hunting ground dwelling animals and birds in the immediate environment.
- The presence of the Dingo in the landscape also maintains a healthier environment generally by maintaining an ecological balance which not only maintains ecological biodiversity but promotes a healthy native ground cover which even reduces soil erosion (this has been demonstrated by studies focussing on the impacts of the 'Dog Fence' in central Australia).

3. Cultural Significance of the Dingo

- The Dingo is known to be culturally significant to First Nations peoples. This is evidenced by the coexistence of First Nations people and the Dingo over thousands of years.
- Aswald Brierly who arrived in Twofold Bay with Benjamin Boyd in 1842, documented in his journals, a number of campfires extending along a beach on which he camped on his first night. He noted that these campfires belonged to individual Aboriginal families. He also noted that each family had a Dingo pup which he assumed were used to keep the children warm at night.
- Some Aboriginal tribes recognised the Dingo as a totem. This demonstrates the cultural significance of the Dingo to Aboriginal peoples throughout Australia.

4. Management of the Dingo in NSW National Parks

- The baiting and trapping of Dingoes has been demonstrated to break down the social fabric of dingo family groups resulting in rogue individuals dispersing beyond their core habitat to the extremities of the park with a higher likelihood of predating on domestic stock.
- Given the seemingly counterproductive impact of these 'control' programs, all 1080 baiting, including aerial baiting and mound baiting, and trapping should cease immediately in NSW national parks.
- Farmers should be encouraged to employ the use of guardian animals, eg Maremma dogs and donkeys, to fend off potential attacks on livestock from feral dogs and dingos.
- Farmers should also be encouraged to keep their stock in at night and maintain adequate fencing.
- First Nations peoples should be given an equal say in the management of Dingos in NSW national parks as non indigenous peoples. They should also be given the opportunity to contribute their cultural knowledge and be given a direct role in the day to day management of the Dingo in these parks where they feel they can contribute.
- National parks should be a place where all native animals are protected in keeping with the purpose of these reserves.

5. Animal Welfare of the Dingo

- Having lived adjoining a national parks in SE NSW for the past 26 years I have witnessed the cruel and barbaric death of my border collie who happened to follow a group of bushwalkers into the park while they threw a stick for him. I have been traumatised ever since, especially when I hear the unmistakable screams of baited animals in the park at night.
- The excruciatingly cruel death from 1080 baits makes the shooting of feral horses in Kosciusko National Park a very humane form of control in comparison.

Conclusion

Given the counterproductive and cruel nature of these programs and the absolute insult to First Nations peoples who hold such a strong cultural bond with the Dingo, I believe that all Dingo control programs should cease immediately in NSW national parks.

Regards
Noel Whitem