

Best Practice Guidelines for Wild Dog Control

Best practice guidelines
for land managers



MANAGING WILD DOGS IN THE SA ARID LANDS REGION SOUTH OF THE DOG FENCE

With wild dog activity and impacts varying across the landscape, the SA Arid Lands NRM Board has established guidelines for all land managers in the region inside (south of) the Dog Fence to support a best practice approach to wild dog management.

Under the *Natural Resource Management Act 2004 (NRM Act)*, dingos and their hybrids (wild dogs) inside the Dog Fence are a declared pest, with all land managers legally required to destroy them¹. This declaration is irrespective of land use and applies to both livestock and non-livestock properties.

These guidelines² have been established to assist land managers to meet their legislative requirements. Failure to destroy dogs can result in the Board initiating action to enforce compliance under the NRM Act.

¹ Outside (north of) the Dog Fence the dingo is classified as an unprotected native wildlife species with a management objective to protect the cattle industry and human safety while maintaining the ecological and cultural roles of the Dingo. Contact the Wild Dog Management Team 8648 5300 for information on wild dog control measures in this area.

² These guidelines heavily reference the *PestSmart Field Guide to Poison Baiting: Wild Dogs and Foxes* produced by the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre. Methods and advice have been tailored to the semi-arid rangelands and any wild dog control measures must meet current regulations and policies.



A TWO-TIERED APPROACH TO WILD DOG MANAGEMENT

The SA Arid Lands NRM Board have developed a two-tiered management approach to guide best practice wild dog control on properties. This approach (Figure 2: Flow Chart) ensures all land managers are engaged in regular, **proactive** monitoring and prevention of wild dog activity, with a **reactive** management approach initiated where evidence of dog activity is found.

An example demonstrating the application of this two tiered approach is shown in Figure 1: Map.



Proactive Management: monitor and prevent dog activity

A proactive wild dog management program is designed to prevent wild dog impacts and populations from establishing. This commitment to managing dogs should be undertaken on an ongoing basis where there is no evidence of wild dog activity. A proactive program involves:

- Laying at least **one bait** along every kilometre of track across the property twice per year in both spring and autumn.
- Monitoring selected bait sites, at least monthly, at locations where wild dog activity is likely to be detected, e.g. at track intersections, stock pads or on tracks leading to water sources, and replacing baits as required. These selected sites can be identified with GPS, or with old stock ear tags or flagging tape to assist in relocating baits.
- Setting traps in areas of potential wild dog activity, using lures such as scats and scents to attract wild dogs that may be present but not evident.
- Incorporating shooting into normal work activities in case of an opportunistic wild dog sighting.

Reactive Management: manage and reduce dog activity

A reactive wild dog management program is designed to remove wild dogs where evidence of activity is found (e.g. a sighting, tracks or scats, stock loss). Where evidence of activity is found, a response should be initiated **immediately**. This involves:

- Urgently notifying neighbouring properties, the Local Area Planning Group, and the Wild Dog Management Team at Natural Resources SA Arid Lands.
- Defining a management zone within 10km of **each** activity location to cover the expected home range of a wild dog.
- Lay **five baits** along every kilometre of track within each management zone at least twice per year.
- Monitoring selected bait sites, at least monthly, at locations where wild dog activity is likely to be detected, e.g. at track intersections, stock pads or on tracks leading to water sources, and replacing baits as required. These selected sites can be identified with GPS, or with old stock ear tags or flagging tape to assist in relocating baits.
- Set traps in areas where scats, tracks or scent posts are found.
- Schedule regular shooting to target trap or bait shy dogs, with the aid of spotlights and audible attractants.
- Conduct monthly inspections and monitoring across the zone.

Continue reactive control efforts until no further evidence of wild dog activity is found in these zones then return them to a proactive wild dog management program.

Areas of the property outside of a reactive management zone should continue to be managed using a proactive program (Figure 1: Map of example property).

FIGURE 1: MAP OF EXAMPLE PROPERTY

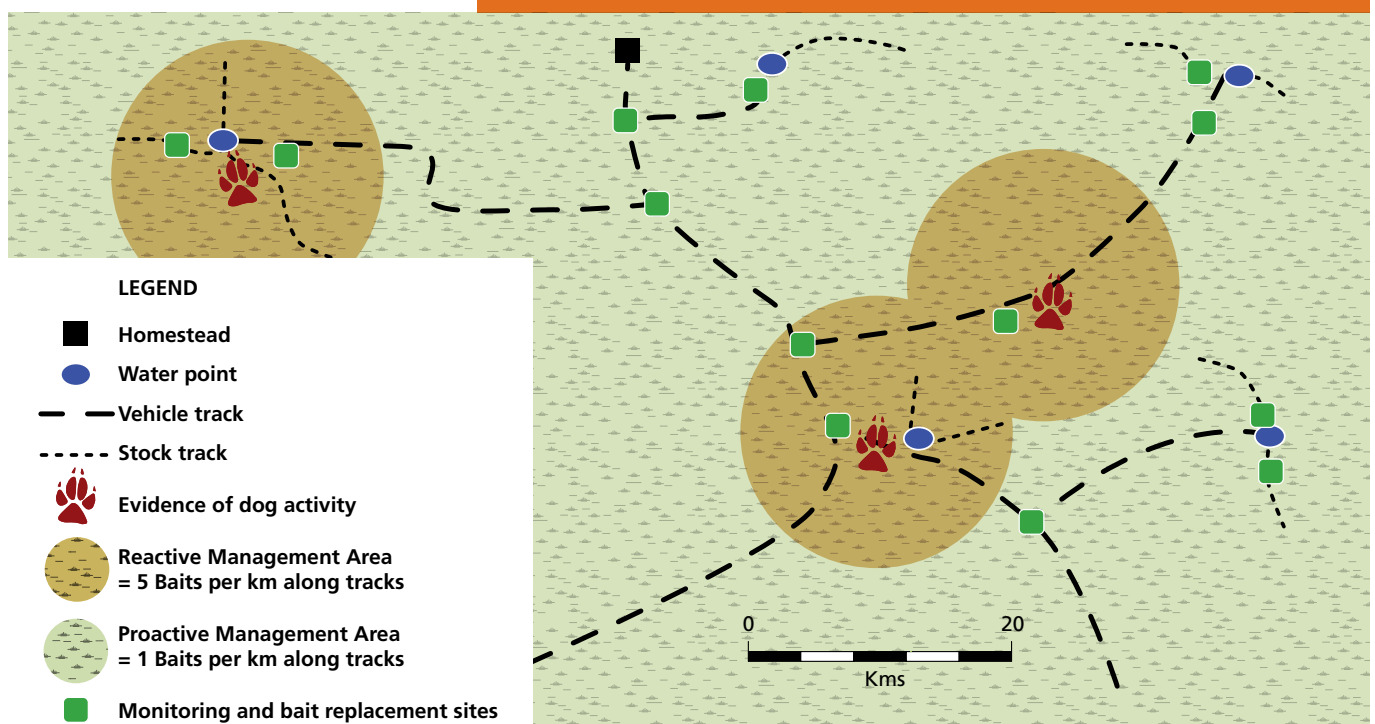




FIGURE 2: TWO TIER MANAGEMENT APPROACH FLOW CHART

COMPONENTS OF A BEST PRACTICE, INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Research and industry consensus recognises that while baiting is the most cost, time and resource efficient tool available to support wild dog management, the integration of other control methods (trapping, shooting) is crucial to successful outcomes. Below is additional detail on the major components of an integrated wild dog management program.

Baiting

Lethal baits are extremely cost effective compared to other control tools; proven to deliver effective broad scale wild dog population reductions; and their dispersal is easily incorporated into general property management activities such as fence line and water checks.

A bait is any item registered for use that is targeted to deliver a lethal dose of a registered poison – Sodium Fluoroacetate (1080) or Paramino Propriophenome (PAPP) – to a wild dog.

The most common bait for wild dog control is a partially dried, fresh meat bait injected with 6mg of 1080. Bait preparation is critical to the presentation and effectiveness of a bait. Fresh meat baits should be muscle tissue or hearts and must be largely absent of bone or fat. Varying the source animal (e.g. beef, lamb, horse, camel, kangaroo) will increase the chances of a wild dog taking a bait.

Fresh meat baits should be drained of blood and semi dried so that a skin forms on the outside, ensuring that the bait retains the 1080 once injected. Frozen meat must be completely thawed prior to 1080 injection. Manufactured (factory made) baits with 6mg of 1080 or 1000mg of PAPP or canid pest ejectors containing 6mg of 1080 are also available.

Bait availability

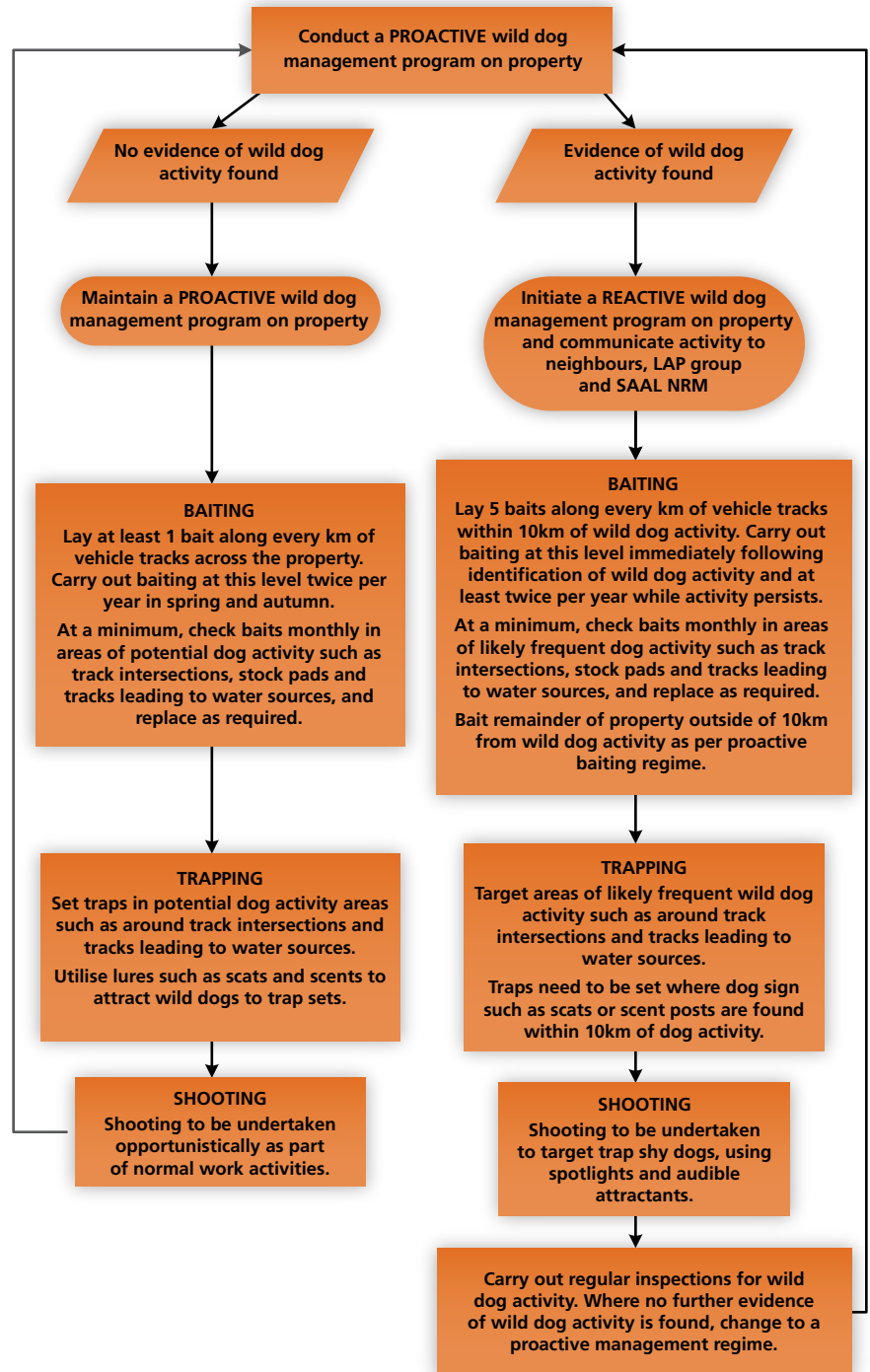
The ability for a wild dog to find a bait is influenced by several things, with the greatest variable being the taking of baits by an off target species. 1080 is highly toxic to canids (foxes and dogs) and wild dog bait sizes and strengths

are targeted specifically towards wild dogs to minimise off-target take and harm.

Foxes can be detrimental to a wild dog control program. They generally find a bait before a wild dog can and individual foxes have been known to take several baits prior to the onset of poisoning symptoms (about four hours). There is also evidence of individual wild dogs ingesting over 10 baits prior to the onset of symptoms.

Other common sources of off target bait-take include reptiles (e.g. goannas), birds (e.g. birds of prey and corvids) and cats.

While 1080 tolerance by native fauna is far greater to that of canids, every care should be taken to minimise off target damage. Goannas have a lower tolerance to PAPP so timing of bait laying when using this poison should be conducted when reptile activity is low. Laying techniques (e.g. burying or placing baits under bushes) will minimise take by birds, allow for greater availability of a bait to a wild dog, and also reduce any unwanted off target damage. Baiting can be carried out year round but is more effective during times of wild dog dispersal (autumn and spring).



Trapping

Soft-jawed leg hold traps are best used following a 1080 baiting program or to target bait-shy dogs. Traps are typically set on the side of a stock pad or vehicle track, or on tracks leading to water points, with lures used to attract the dog into the trap site.

Under the *South Australian Animal Welfare Regulations 2012*, trap jaws must be treated with an approved agricultural chemical product (currently strychnine) to ensure a rapid death for trapped animals.

Wild dog trapping should be conducted by suitably trained and experienced persons. Dogs are known for their intelligence; if a wild dog triggers a trap without being captured, it will likely become trap shy and hesitant to approach traps in the future.

Trapping can be carried out year round but, like baiting, is best targeted during times of wild dog dispersal (autumn and spring). Having a trapper available on short notice, or traps accessible for immediate use will maximise response time.

Shooting

Shooting, both scheduled and opportunistic, is regarded as the most humane method of wild dog destruction if carried out by experienced, skilled and responsible shooters. Scheduled shooting programs can occur with the aid of spotlighting methods or using audible attractants such as electronic callers or vocalisation from the shooter. Volunteer shooters

(e.g. Sporting Shooters Association of Australia's Farmer Assist program) can provide suitably experienced operators to assist land managers.

Coordination

Coordination at a landscape scale is highly important for any pest management program. As wild dogs are a mobile animal, coordinated management over a group of properties, such as a Local Area Planning Groups, will provide longer lasting benefits compared to properties working independently. Any wild dog sightings, signs or damage should be communicated promptly to neighbouring properties to allow all land managers to react in a cooperative and timely manner as well as to the Wild Dog Management team at Natural Resources SA Arid Lands on 8648 5300.

Monitoring

Ongoing monitoring is an important element to a wild dog management program to determine wild dog presence, guide control programs, and determine their success. The simplest form of wild dog monitoring is conducting and recording observations of wild dog activity signs including dog tracks, scats, damage or behaviour change or damage to wildlife and stock. Remote cameras and sand plots are also efficient and accurate methods of monitoring and require infrequent checking.

USEFUL LINKS

Field Guide to Poison Baiting: Wild Dogs and Foxes www.pestsmart.org.au/field-guide-poison-baiting-wild-dogs-foxes

SA Arid Lands NRM Wild Dog management page www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/aridlands/plants-and-animals/pest-plants-and-animals/pest-animals/wild-dog-management

SA Wild Dog Strategic Plan www.pir.sa.gov.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0006/285252/Wild_Dog_Strategic_Plan.pdf

Policy on Management of Dingo Populations in South Australia www.pir.sa.gov.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0014/232043/SA_NRM_Act_Dingo_Policy_2011.pdf

National Wild Dog Action Plan www.pestsmart.org.au/national-wild-dog-action-plan

PestSmart Wild Dog Pest Animal Toolkit – Info on biology, management and FAQs www.pestsmart.org.au/pest-animal-species/wild-dog

APVMA Review Report into the use of products containing sodium fluoroacetate (1080) apvma.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication/15061-sodium-fluororacetate-1080-final-review-report.pdf

LD50 of 1080 for South Australian Species www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/files/sharedassets/sa_arid_land/plants_and_animals/relative_susceptibilities_of_non-target_species_from_1080.pdf

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact the Wild Dog Management Team, Natural Resources Centre, Port Augusta on 8648 5300 or saaridlands@sa.gov.au



Natural Resources SA Arid Lands
8648 5300
SAAridlands@sa.gov.au
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