

Guideline

Managing Wild Dogs

Version: 1.0 (December 2013)

Doc1 Reference: P064068

Invasive Species Branch

Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment



1 Introduction

This Guideline provides guidance and direction for the management of wild dogs in Tasmania as well as distinguishing between wild dogs and 'dogs at large' and the responsibilities for management.

Tasmania is fortunate not to have a significant wild dog population and the related impacts and management issues and costs that these populations can have on primary industries and biodiversity. Wild dogs pose a significant risk to livestock, native wildlife, companion or domestic animals and human safety. Through a collaborative approach, involving coordination between landowners and managers, Tasmania can avoid these impacts being realised at a large scale.

Reports of small packs of wild dogs are received, often in the Central Highlands, but the reports are infrequent and isolated. Dogs at large are considered to be a larger problem, especially in urban and peri-urban areas, and risk providing a source for a larger and more widespread wild dog population. Dogs at large also present a similar risk to primary industries, wildlife, domestic and companion animals and human health as wild dogs and specific legislation exists to manage that risk.

2 Glossary

Animal Control Officer (ACO) - an officer appointed by a local government to enforce Council bylaws relating to animal control and the Dog Control Act

Animal Welfare Act - the *Animal Welfare Act 1993*

Dog at large - a wandering dog, defined by s5 of the Dog Control Act as a dog that:

(a) is not under the effective control of a person in a public place or in or on premises without the consent of the occupier; or

(b) is a dangerous dog in a public place and is –

(i) in the charge of a person under the age of 18 years; or

(ii) without a muzzle; or

(iii) not on a lead; or

(iv) without an approved collar.

Dog Control Act - the *Dog Control Act 2000*, together with the *Dog Control Regulations 2010*

Nil tenure - an approach to invasive species management that involves land owners and managers working collaboratively and in a coordinated manner across property boundaries to deal with an invasive species. It is sometimes described as a 'tenure blind' approach.

Peri-urban area - landscapes that combine urban and rural development or adjacent to urban areas

Reserve Land - means land declared under the *Nature Conservation Act 2002* to be reserved land. This includes National Parks, State Reserves and Conservation Areas

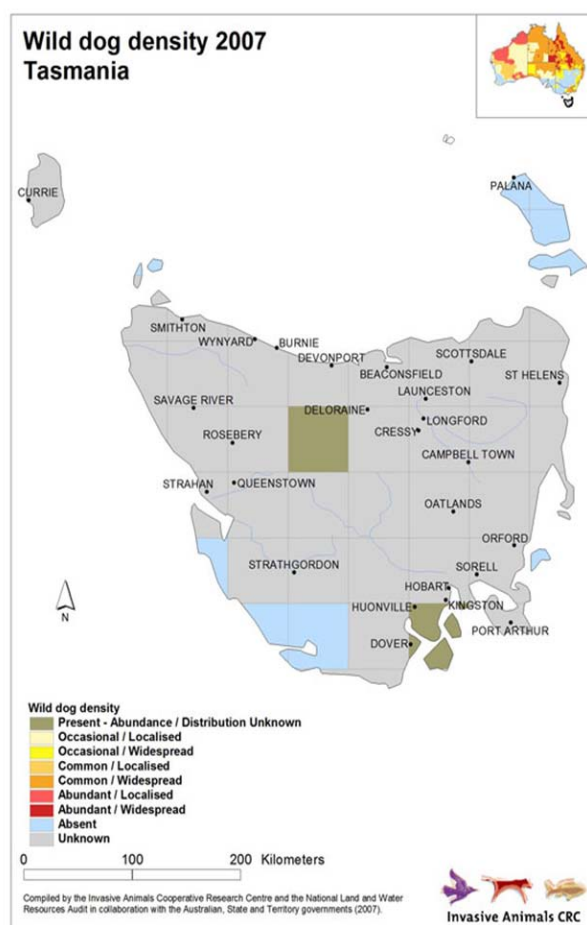
Vermin Control Act - the *Vermin Control Act 1990*

Wild dog - a dog not relying on human assistance for shelter and / or food

3 Species Profile

Generally, wild dogs in Australia are considered to be dingoes (*Canis lupus dingo*), domesticated dogs returning to a wild state (*Canus lupus familiaris*) or a hybrid of the two subspecies. Tasmania does not have a native dingo population. Wild dogs are generally thought to be abandoned or lost hunting or working dogs or lost domestic pets that have formed mobile packs.

Wild dogs have been observed in rural and remote areas of Tasmania, especially in the Central Highlands. Packs have been removed from the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and adjacent Reserve land. More information on wild dogs in Tasmania is available at www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/invasivespecies.



4 Legislation

Wild dogs are not currently listed as 'vermin' under the Vermin Control Act.

Section 41 of the Dog Control Act allows for the restraint or destruction of dogs under certain circumstances including that:

- (1) A person may restrain or destroy a dog if the person –*
 - (a) is being attacked by the dog; or*
 - (b) sees the dog attacking –*
 - (i) another person; or*
 - (ii) another animal; or*
 - (iii) a guide dog or hearing dog.*
- (2) A person who restrains a dog under subsection (1) is to notify the general manager as soon as possible.*
- (3) A person carrying on primary production relating to livestock on rural land or any other person acting under his or her authority may destroy any dog at large found on that land.*
- (4) A person who destroys a dog under subsection (1) or (3), within 14 days after destroying the dog, must*
 - (a) notify the general manager; and*
 - (b) return to the general manager any registration disc worn by the dog.*

With reference to s41(4), the 'General Manager' to be notified is the General Manager (or delegate) of the relevant local government. Section 35 of the Dog Control Act also allows for authorised persons to seize and detain any dogs at large and take further action in relation to the dog.

Regulation 7 of the *National Parks and Reserved Land Regulations 2009* prohibits the introduction of an animal to, including a person allowing an animal to be taken onto or remaining on, reserved land. The Regulations specify limited circumstances where dogs may be permitted to be taken onto Reserve Land and further advice must be sought from the Parks and Wildlife Service prior to taking dogs onto Reserve Land. Regulation 39 permits the seizure and destruction of wild dogs and other animals contrary to the Regulations

The Animal Welfare Act applies to the management of wild dogs with penalties for the mistreatment of animals. Section 12 of the Animal Welfare Act specifically prohibits the use of leghold traps and snares. Cage traps are permitted to be used under this section. Section 8(2)(h)(vi) of the Animal Welfare Act permits the use of specific toxins to control pest animals. Under s8A of the Animal Welfare Act, a register of 'pest animals' and available toxins is maintained and can be accessed at <http://www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/WebPages/LBUN-7PN2Q4?open>. The use of toxins is restricted under the *Poisons Act 1971* and additional conditions for use exist under the *Police Offences Act 1935*.

5 Management Objectives

Given wild dogs are not widespread or established in Tasmania, the objective is to respond to the presence of wild dogs with a 'nil tenure' approach to prevent wild dog populations increasing and widespread impacts occurring.

6 Management Responsibilities

The detection and destruction of wild dog packs should be given a high priority by land managers. The Invasive Species Branch (ISB) of the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment is available to provide support in planning a 'nil tenure' plan to respond to a wild dog pack including assistance with monitoring the movement of the pack to develop the plan. If resources are available, assistance with control activities may be possible.

ACO's appointed by local government are responsible for the management of dogs at large within their local government area as directed by that local government.

Wild dogs and dogs at large found on Reserve Land may be trapped or destroyed by the Parks and Wildlife Service or agents working on their behalf.

Members of the public are encouraged to report the presence of wild dogs, especially in Reserve Land, to the land owner or manager.

Animal welfare requirements must be considered when planning and conducting management of wild dogs. The use of toxins or poisons and firearms is regulated and any person using those methods must ensure they comply with the relevant legislation. The Code of Practice for Humane Control of Wild Dogs (Sharp and Saunders, 2012) provides guidance on humane destruction techniques and should be considered in conjunction with the Animal Welfare Act.

7 Management Options

The ISB promotes a standard approach to managing invasive species issues. Guidance on this process is provided in the Guideline – Best Practice Management of Invasive Animals (DPIPWE, 2014). Controlling wild dogs requires planning and coordination between land owners and managers. Wild dogs will move across property boundaries and a nil tenure approach is needed to deal with these problems.

The most effective action is to prevent wild dog packs forming.

Don't feed wild dogs, either deliberately or unintentionally to avoid attracting or sustaining populations. Control sources of food including rubbish sites and access to food for domestic pets. Manage livestock to reduce opportunities for wild dogs to attack through fencing and the use of guardian animals. Watering points may also attract wild dogs seeking water to drink as well as recognising that potential prey can be found at the site. Ensure hunters or other people bringing dogs onto your property are controlling their animals and report any lost dogs.

Control of any pest animal can raise community concern; particularly with regard to animal welfare issues and land access requirements. Animal welfare issues can be mitigated through the selection of humane control techniques and good communication between land managers. These issues need to be integrated into any wild dog management plan.

Prior to selecting a management option, obtaining information on dog numbers, distribution, behaviour and movements are vital. This can be achieved by undertaking some initial monitoring which, ideally, should be undertaken prior to finalising a plan. Search for signs of movement pathways such as tracks and carcasses. Wild dogs will often kill prey by attacking the throat of the prey animal. Often attacks will also start by the wild dog attacking from behind as the prey animal attempts to run away, leading to injuries to the hind legs of the prey animal. Monitoring cameras in areas where wild dogs may be located will also assist.

Effective wild dog control may require the use of a number of different management tools and techniques. In Tasmania the management options for wild dogs are;

7.1 Trapping

Trapping options are limited to the use of cage and soft jaw traps. It is important to monitor traps to prevent distress and pain to trapped animals and, as a result, trapping can be resource intensive to conduct. The Pestsmart toolkit has good resources, including demonstration videos, on the use of traps and lures that can assist in preparing for and undertaking trapping.

Trapping of dogs using cage traps involves the use of a 'treadle plate' operated cage trap with a swinging door. Cage traps are generally effective in capturing wild dog pups but less so in capturing adult dogs. Soft-jaw traps may only be used in accordance with provisions of s12 of the Animal Welfare Act. The use of these traps may assist in removing animals that elude cage traps and shooting. Non-target species or pets that have inadvertently captured can be released.

Caution should be exercised when approaching a dog in a trap, dogs may be vicious when confined and even pet dogs may bite under those circumstances.

7.2 Shooting

Shooting, as a control option, is generally a reactive response to an immediate threat or stock losses or when trapping is not likely to be effective or feasible. Shooting is often opportunistic in its use and can be very time consuming. It may be effective in destroying single dogs.

The use of firearms must be in accordance with the requirements of the *Firearms Act 1996*. Predator calls and animal carcasses as attractants may lure dogs within rifle range and establishing shooting blinds can be helpful, especially along tracks and runs used by dogs.

If a pack of damaging wild dogs is established, it may be worthwhile to trap one or two members of the pack, fit them with radio transmitters, and release them. Wild dogs are highly social, and by periodically locating the radio-tagged dogs with a radio receiver, it is possible to locate other members of the group. When other members of the pack are destroyed, the radio collared dogs can be located and shot. In Tasmania this technique has been used effectively for the eradication of other invasive animals.

7.3 Exclusion fencing

Generally, exclusion fencing is the most humane non-lethal option but it may also have impacts on non-target species. It is best used in concert with other methods and may involve the use of electric fences or buried box or netted fences to prevent wild dogs entering an area. Exclusion fencing may not exclude all wild dogs and may require ongoing maintenance to prevent gaps developing. Wild dogs may learn to climb over or dig under fences or identify access points such as gateways or gain entry via watercourses. This option may prevent wild dogs entering a specific area but does not remove them from the wider area.

7.4 Guardian animals

This has emerged as an effective and humane alternative to lethal control with specific breeds of dogs and other species (e.g. donkeys or llamas) identified as effective long-term options to protect livestock. Trials interstate are showing that this option can be effective where livestock are kept in areas with wild dog packs. Guardian animals require careful selection and ongoing training and may have high initial start-up costs. This option may prevent the impacts of wild dogs on livestock but does not remove the wild dogs from the wider area.

7.5 Poisoning

Some toxins or poisons may be available for use although the use is restricted under the *Poisons Act 1971*. Poisons may be delivered via baits, mechanical ejectors or 'poison collars' (where a collar containing the toxin is placed on a potential prey animal and the toxin delivered when the wild dog attacks the animal). The ISB is currently working on the possible use of mechanical bait ejectors with a 'collar' that prevents non-target species accessing the toxin. These are being trialled for foxes but, when resourcing is available, the wider application for wild dogs will be considered. The ISB is also monitoring the progress of the registration of para-aminopropiophenone (PAPP), an experimental toxin considered more humane than 1080, with the APVMA and its potential use. A risk assessment for the use of PAPP in Tasmania is being completed by the ISB in anticipation of registration approval. The use of toxins presents a number of risks and land managers need to discuss this option with the ISB in relation to the approval process and options available.

8 Further Information

Braysher, M (1993) "Managing Vertebrate Pests: Principles and Strategies", Bureau of Resources Sciences, Canberra

DPIPWE (2014) "Guideline - Best Practice Management of Invasive Animals", Invasive Species Branch, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment [online] accessed at www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/invasivespecies

DPIPWE (2013) "Wild dogs", Invasive Species Branch, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment [online] accessed at www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/invasivespecies

Fleming, P., Corbett, L., Harden, R., and Thomson, P. (2001) "Managing the Impacts of Dingoes and Other Wild Dogs", Bureau of Rural Sciences, Canberra [online] accessed at www.feral.org.au/managing-the-impacts-of-dingoes-and-other-dogs

Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre, "Pestsmart" toolkit on Wild dogs [online] accessed at www.feral.org.au/pestsmart/wild-dogs including the "Green Book" and "Brown Book" guides to preparing a management plan and demonstration videos

Sharp, T. and Saunders, G. (2012) "Model Code of Practice for the Humane Control of Wild Dogs", Invasive Animals CRC [online] accessed at <http://www.feral.org.au/animal-welfare/humane-codes/>