



WESTERN AUSTRALIAN WILD DOG MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2005



Information for pastoralists and farmers
Summary strategy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wild dogs (*Canis familiaris*, *Canis familiaris dingo* and hybrids) are one of the major pest species of livestock grazing industries in Western Australia and Australia. Wild dogs are defined as all wild-living dogs (including dingoes and hybrids). The aim of the wild dog management strategy is not to eliminate wild dogs from the State, but to control their impact on domestic stock.

Although dingoes are unprotected fauna in WA under a subsidiary notice of the Wildlife Conservation Act 1950, they are fauna protected under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. The Animal Welfare Act 2002 provides for the welfare, safety and health of all vertebrate animals in WA except fish. While the Act does not prohibit the killing of an animal there is an obligation to be as humane as possible.

The control of wild dogs has taken many forms over the last two hundred years. Many of the traditional control techniques used during that time still have relevance today, while others are no longer used as society's acceptance of them has changed or improved methods have become available.

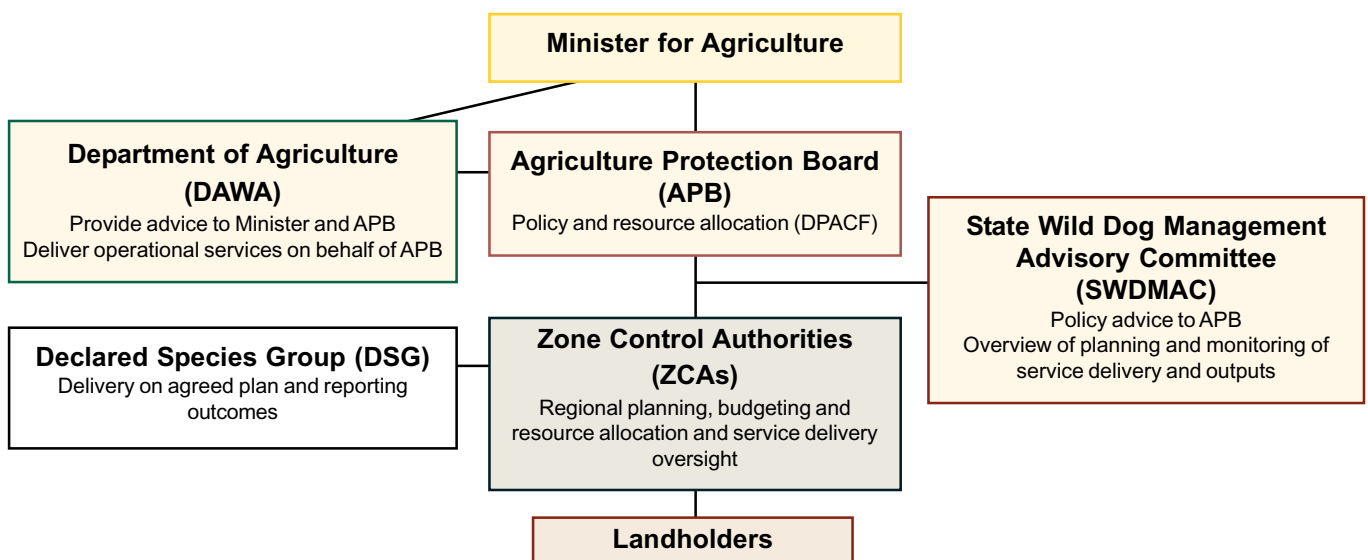
The future challenge is to ensure that existing wild dog control techniques are used safely and humanely and effectively as possible, that new techniques are developed to achieve control and address community issues, and that all stakeholders recognise and participate cooperatively in wild dog management.

A State-wide strategy is essential to enable the community to manage the impacts of wild dogs effectively. All land managers (both private and public) and the community need to be involved in a focused partnership that will provide the basis for the management of the impact of wild dogs in Western Australia.

The approaches taken will depend on the risk profile of the relevant industries:

- € Sheep/goats (*highest risk, zero tolerance of wild dogs*). Requires intensive control on the specific enterprise, aiming for a zero impact from wild dogs, and the creation of an effective buffer in neighbouring country harbouring wild dogs (regardless of the status or tenure of that adjacent land).
- € Cattle (*varying risk, usually can tolerate low to moderate and sometimes even high numbers of wild dogs*). Control to be undertaken to significantly reduce the risk of attacks on cattle. A more sustained reduction can be achieved when control work is coordinated with neighbours. Intensive control is required when the property is adjacent to a sheep/goat enterprise.
- € Unstocked country (*Unallocated Crown Land, Reserves, mining leases, absentee owners, etc - no risk except when it borders stocked country, although the risk will vary with type of stock*). Intensive control is required when forming part of a buffer adjacent to sheep/goat enterprises. Often no control is warranted when adjacent to cattle country, unless that cattle country is undertaking intensive control because of specific risks (calving/weaning areas etc.).

WILD DOG MANAGEMENT WITHIN WESTERN AUSTRALIA



STRATEGY GOAL

To minimise the impact of wild dogs on economic and community values through the implementation of a community supported strategic approach to wild dog management on both private and public land that contributes to the protection of livestock while supporting the conservation of pure dingoes in other areas of the state.

Scope of the strategy

This strategy has been established to address all wild dog impacts within Western Australia. It is linked to other planning frameworks as shown in the strategy matrix (Table 1), and draws on activities at the property level.

Wild dog management, under the various legislation, is the responsibility of the land manager, including the managers of all private, leasehold and public land.

In addition, the Government's role in wild dog management includes the provision of an appropriate legislative and policy framework providing research, advice and assistance on best practice management. It ensures effective humane and economic management of the impacts of wild dogs from public land by the agencies responsible for management of that land.

Implementation of the Strategy will effectively coordinate strategic and sustained wild dog management statewide across all land tenures¹ in a way that:

- € Creates effective long-term partnerships within the community to ensure that wild dog management priorities are clear and reflected in Regional Wild Dog Management Plans;
- € Is based on recognised best practice² wild dog management and focuses principally on the protection of livestock rather than destruction of wild dogs;
- € Recognises that the implementation of best practice wild dog management must be managed effectively and accepted within the community;
- € Ensures a coordinated and cooperative management approach between public and private land managers;
- € Improves community knowledge and understanding of the wild dog problem, impacts of wild dogs and ensures skilled and effective community participation in management activities.

Effective wild dog management will involve close integration of policy, research, on-ground management and monitoring if it is to achieve the goals of the Strategy.

The Strategy has seven components:

- € Effective statewide coordination of the wild dog program;
- € Implementation of best practice wild dog management on both private and public lands;
- € Targeted research for best practice wild dog management;
- € Effectively manage a whole of community response (private and public land managers) to the wild dog program;
- € Encourage increased government participation including local government;
- € Monitoring, evaluation and reporting of wild dog activity and impact;
- € Broader community awareness of wild dog issues.

¹ All Tenure (**nil tenure**) involves the removal of property boundaries from maps and substituting them with criteria of landscape relevance such as vegetation type. By collectively identifying the scope of the issue, the control techniques available and the level of resources required, the **nil tenure** approach allows management strategies to be formulated at the landscape level.

² **Best Practice** involves integrating multiple techniques in a planned way, taking account of overall land management, species biology, and other variables; ie using the best information and techniques available to better manage the impacts of the pest.



Table 1: Context and relationship of the Western Australian Wild Dog Management Strategy to planning initiatives at other levels

Scope Scale	Natural Resource Management (NRM)	Pest Management	Pest species
National	National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity National Rangelands Guidelines National NRM Statement New Australian Animal Welfare Strategy	National Vertebrate Pest Strategy (proposed)	National Wild Dog Strategy (proposed) Managing the impacts of dingoes and other wild dogs
State	Western Australian Biodiversity and NRM Strategy (proposed)	Western Australian Vertebrate Pest Strategy (proposed)	Western Australian Wild Dog Management Strategy
Regional	Regional NRM Strategy and Plans	Regional Pest Management Plans (proposed)	Regional (ZCA) Wild Dog Management Plans (proposed)
District			WDMG (DSG) Management Plans (proposed)
Property	Property NRM Management Plans	Property Pest Management Plans	Property Wild Dog Management Plans

PRINCIPLES OF THE STRATEGY

The development and implementation of this strategy are based on the following pest management principles:

1. **Consultation and partnership.** Consultation and partnership arrangements between landholders, local communities, industry groups, State government agencies and local governments must be established to achieve a collaborative and ongoing approach to pest management.
2. **Commitment.** Effective pest management requires a long-term commitment by the community and government.
3. **Public awareness.** Public awareness and knowledge of pests and their impacts must be raised to increase the acceptance, capacity and willingness of individuals to humanely control pests.
4. **Prevention.** Effective pest control is achieved by:
 - € preventing the spread of pests by human activity;
 - € early detection of pests, and early intervention to control their spread and adverse impacts.
5. **Ecological processes.** Pest control techniques that have the least impact on, and reinforce the resilience of, ecological processes must be used as much as is practical.
6. **Integration.** Pest management is an integral part of managing natural resources and production systems for the longer term.
7. **Planning.** Pest management planning must be consistent at local, regional, state and national levels to ensure that:
 - € domestic and international obligations about pest management are met;
 - € a widespread, effective planning process is maintained across the landscape to target the priorities of affected stakeholders;
 - € all available resources are efficiently used to target priorities identified under state, national and international best practice management.
8. **Research.** Ongoing research is essential to achieve continuous improvements in pest management practices.
9. **Monitoring and evaluation.** Regular monitoring and evaluation of pest occurrence and control activities is necessary to achieve continuous improvements in pest management practices.
10. **Animal Welfare.** The strategy recognises the inherent welfare issues associated with the control of wild dogs, as well as the expectation of the community that all animals, including pest species, are treated as humanely as possible. Any control program must:
 - € recognise that wild dogs require the same level of consideration for their welfare as that given to domestic and other animals;
 - € be conducted as humanely as possible, be target specific and not cause suffering to non-target animals.
 - € comply with the Animal Welfare Act 2002 (AWA) and its supporting regulations.

Objectives

Objective 1: Improve the statewide coordination of the wild dog program

It is essential that the community has input into the planning and management as well as the ownership of the wild dog program. Regionally based and community formed Wild Dog Management Groups (WDMGs) will be established and based within the Zone Control Authority (ZCA) structure. These Management Groups will be required to set the strategic and funding directions for the operation of the wild dog program in their region, taking into account best practice wild dog management. A key component of the strategic direction setting will be the development of Regional Wild Dog Management Plans.

	Performance Indicator	Method of Verification
Measure 1	Number of regional plans fully endorsed by SWDMAC. (Currently 7 regions – Kimberley, Pilbara, Carnarvon, Meekatharra, Kalgoorlie, Esperance, Merredin).	Achievement against the 6 actions as outlined in the full version of the strategy.
Measure 2	Proportion of land managers participating in the planning process.	Audit of land managers participating.

Objective 2: Implementation of best practice wild dog management on both private and public lands

Wild dog management techniques will be effective, safe, humane as possible and appropriate to limiting the damage caused by wild dogs to livestock. Research in WA and interstate has shown that wild dogs are relatively sedentary, and do not routinely travel significant distances to attack livestock. The highest risk to stock comes from wild dogs residing within the paddocks, or from adjacent country. It follows that management effort should be directed towards those high-risk areas. For the highest-risk enterprises such as sheep properties, the aim is to remove wild dogs from the paddocks, as well as from an adjacent and appropriate buffer zone, using a mix of best practice management techniques to minimise the risk of movement into the cleared paddocks. The strategy requires that the buffer zone be maintained whatever the tenure of that particular land (public, private, pastoral leasehold, mining, etc). For lower-risk enterprises (most cattle properties), the strategy requires the use of best practice techniques to reduce wild dog numbers in the stocked country.

With the focus on best practice wild dog management, it is recognised that to be effective, techniques such as trapping, baiting, shooting, barrier and electric fencing must be carried out at a high level of efficiency and closely integrated with each other.

	Performance Indicator	Method of Verification
Measure 1	Number of regional plans utilising best practice techniques.	Audit of regional plans to confirm adoption of best practice.
Measure 2	Proportion of land managers implementing planned wild dog program.	Audit of land managers participation.
Measure 3	Proportion of land managers implementing individual on-property ground baiting.	Audit of land managers purchasing ground baiting resources.



Objective 3: Targeted research for best practice wild dog management

Research into best practices for wild dog management will be targeted to enhance the strategic approach outlined in this strategy, and will be readily applied in the field and made available to the community. High priority will be given to research activities that support the effective implementation of this strategy and assist resource decisions within Regional Wild Dog Management Plans.

	Performance Indicator	Method of Verification
Measure 1	Number of agreed high priority research projects undertaken.	Research projects received by SWDMAC.
Measure 2	Number of research recommendations that are adopted in the regional plans.	Audit of regional plans.

Objective 4: Effectively build community capacity (private and public land managers) to implement the wild dog program

It should be recognised that any change of focus in the wild dog program will need to be managed and accepted within the community, with progressive achievements over a period of time. The process for change will be aided through the development of extension programs, clear communication processes and training activities that recognise that change is often difficult and requires support.

	Performance Indicator	Method of Verification
Measure 1	Number of land managers (public and private) aware of best practice.	Survey results of best practice awareness.
Measure 2	Number of land managers accredited for poison use.	Audit of land manager accreditation.

Objective 5: Ensure regulatory powers are utilised to address non-compliance.

Implementation of a nil tenure approach to wild dog management necessitates that all managers participate in planned coordinated management on both private and public land. Public land managers have a responsibility to manage wild dogs on land vested in them or managed by them. There are several Acts of legislation that affect wild dog management, including ARRPA, AWA, Dog Act, Health Act, Poisons Act etc.

	Performance Indicator	Method of Verification
Measure 1	Proportion of change in compliance implemented under each Legislative Act.	Benchmark non compliant land managers becoming compliant.

Objective 6: To achieve agreed levels of monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Prompt reporting of stock losses is essential for coordinated and effective management to be carried out and for guiding resourcing decisions by WDMGs. This reporting will form part of a community-based monitoring program of the damage caused by wild dogs to livestock. The reporting of attacks and wild dog activity and requests to WDMG for assistance in wild dog management will be coordinated through a clearly defined process, with a designated WDMG member as the first point of contact for landholders.



It needs to be recognised that if control is being carried out effectively, the level of stock losses will be low. It is essential that resources are targeted to areas where there are well planned and implemented programs rather than to areas that have high stock losses due to poorly planned and conducted control.

	Performance Indicator	Method of Verification
Measure 1	Proportion of land managers monitoring and reporting wild dog activity in a timely manner.	Audit of information received.
Measure 2	Number of ZCAs that provide monitoring results and evaluation of those results to SWDMAC.	Audit of reports.

Objective 7: Raise community awareness of wild dog issues

The capacity to manage wild dogs will be affected by broader community attitudes and perceptions about impacts and control methods. Public opinion influences not only the type of management strategies that are developed but also the type of control methods that may be deployed. Wider public attitudes rightly demand that the techniques used in wild dog control must be as humane as possible and expose non-target animals to minimal hazard. Management strategies that do not address or acknowledge broad community attitudes are susceptible to disruption or interference.

It is essential that the broader community is aware of the impact of wild dogs and of management strategies to minimise that impact

	Performance Indicator	Method of Verification
Measure 1	Percentage of urban community aware of wild dog issues.	Survey.
Measure 2	Percentage of rural and regional community aware of wild dog issues.	Survey

Abbreviations

APB	Agriculture Protection Board
ARRPA	<i>Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act 1976</i>
AWA	<i>Animal Welfare Act 2002</i>
DAWA	Department of Agriculture Western Australia
SWDMAC	State Wild Dog Management Advisory Committee
VPRS	Vertebrate Pest Research Section (DAWA)
WDMG	Wild Dog Management Group
ZCA	Zone Control Authority



This document was prepared by the State Wild Dog Management Advisory Committee

For further information contact:

Chairperson	Michelle Allen	mobile: 0427 174 227 email: rmallen1@bigpond.com
Executive officer	Barry Davies	Department of Agriculture phone: 9690 2194 mobile: 0404 819 569 email: bdavies@agric.wa.gov.au



IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER The Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Agriculture and the State of Western Australia accept no liability whatsoever by reason of negligence or otherwise arising from the use or release of this information or any part of it.

Copies available from Department of Agriculture, 3 Baron Hay Court, South Perth, WA 6151; Phone: 9368 3333
Web: www.agric.wa.gov.au