

Exclusion Fencing – Cost–Benefit and Cost-Effective Options in Wild Dog Management

Executive Summary

Exclusion fencing has emerged as a transformative tool for wild dog management across Queensland, particularly in regions where traditional control methods have proven insufficient. This case study explores the economic and practical realities of exclusion fencing, drawing on recent qualitative research, survey data, and the lived experiences of Queensland landholders. It highlights the costs, benefits, and lessons learned, and provides recommendations for landholders, investors, and policymakers.

Introduction

Wild dogs (including dingoes and hybrids) continue to pose a significant threat to livestock enterprises in Queensland. Losses to sheep, goats, and increasingly cattle, have driven producers to seek more reliable and long-term solutions. Exclusion fencing—robust, purpose-built barriers designed to keep wild dogs out—has become a cornerstone of modern pest management strategies.

The Investment: Costs and Funding Models

Upfront Costs:

- Exclusion fencing is a major capital investment. Survey respondents and interviewees report costs ranging from \$30,000 for boundary sections to over \$100,000 for large properties or cluster groups.
- Costs include materials (wire, posts, gates, grids), installation, and, in some cases, legal or administrative fees for cluster fencing bodies.

Funding and Cost-Sharing:

- Many landholders have accessed government grants (e.g., Queensland Feral Pest Initiative) or formed cluster groups to share costs and maintenance responsibilities.
- Cluster fencing, where multiple properties are enclosed within a single fence, spreads costs and increases effectiveness, especially in areas with high wild dog pressure.

Ongoing Maintenance:

- Maintenance is critical. Fences are vulnerable to damage from floods, wildlife, and lack of upkeep.
- Landholders report that without regular inspections and repairs, even the best fences can be breached, leading to renewed stock losses.

The Payoff: Benefits and Economic Returns

Reduced Livestock Losses:

- Survey data shows that producers who invested in exclusion fencing report dramatic reductions in sheep and goat losses, and improved calving and lambing rates.
- Some landholders credit exclusion fencing with saving their sheep enterprises, allowing them to remain viable in the face of escalating wild dog impacts.

Improved Enterprise Viability:

- Exclusion fencing has enabled producers



to diversify or expand their operations, with some returning to sheep or goats after years of absence.

- The return on investment is described as “massive” by several interviewees, with some reporting payback periods of less than five years due to increased stock survival and productivity.

Social and Community Benefits:

- Cluster fencing has fostered greater collaboration among neighbours, though it also requires ongoing cooperation for maintenance and monitoring.
- Landholders report improved mental health and reduced stress, knowing their stock are better protected.

Challenges and Limitations

Not a Silver Bullet:

- Exclusion fencing is not foolproof. Wild dogs can breach fences through grids, watercourses, or after weather events.
- Some landholders report continued incursions, especially where fences are incomplete or poorly maintained.

Complacency Risk:

- There is a risk that reliance on fencing can lead to complacency in other control efforts. Interviewees stress the importance of integrating fencing with other methods (baiting, trapping, shooting, guardian animals).

Equity and Access:

- Smaller producers and those in peri-urban areas may struggle to afford exclusion fencing or to access cluster groups.
- Ongoing government support and innovative funding models are needed to ensure equitable access.

Voices from the Field

“Spent an exorbitant amount on fencing materials to erect exclusion fencing after losing 25% of sheep. Am going to spend more on rifle optics.” – Survey respondent, Western Queensland

“My exclusion fence has eliminated my dog problem.” – Survey respondent

“Despite finishing exclusion fences, conducting baiting and aerial shoots we still have a few dogs on the aggregation. Evidence of a lot more on our neighbour to the east (which borders a national park).” – Survey respondent

“Cluster groups transferred into fencing body corporates... Exclusion fencing, return on capital investment will be massive.” – Interviewee

Cost-Effective Options and Recommendations

- **Promote cluster fencing** and cost-sharing models to reduce per-property costs and increase effectiveness.
- **Ensure ongoing maintenance** through regular inspections, rapid repairs, and shared responsibility in cluster groups.
- **Combine fencing with other control methods** for best results—fencing should be part of an integrated pest management strategy.
- **Support for small producers** through targeted grants, technical advice, and inclusion in cluster initiatives.
- **Monitor and evaluate fence effectiveness**, and adapt strategies as wild dog behaviour and environmental conditions change.

References

- QFPI Rd7 Interview themes.docx (2025)
- QFPI Rd7 Survey Results - Final.docx (2025)
- PestSmart Toolkit: <https://pestsmart.org.au/>
- Queensland Department of Primary Industries: <https://www.dpi.qld.gov.au>



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