Case Study

Using a Mix of Methods – How to Be Effective in Wild Dog Management

Executive Summary

Effective wild dog management in Queensland increasingly relies on an integrated approach, combining multiple control methods tailored to local conditions. This case study explores how landholders and councils are using a mix of methods—including baiting, trapping, shooting, exclusion fencing, guardian animals, and surveillance—to achieve better outcomes. Drawing on recent qualitative interviews, survey data, and best practice guidelines, it highlights what works, common barriers, and recommendations for landholders, investors, and policymakers.

Introduction

Wild dogs present a persistent challenge for Queensland's livestock industries. No single control method is universally effective; instead, the most successful landholders use a combination of tools and strategies, adapting to changing conditions and collaborating with neighbours and councils. This integrated approach is supported by both research and on-the-ground experience.

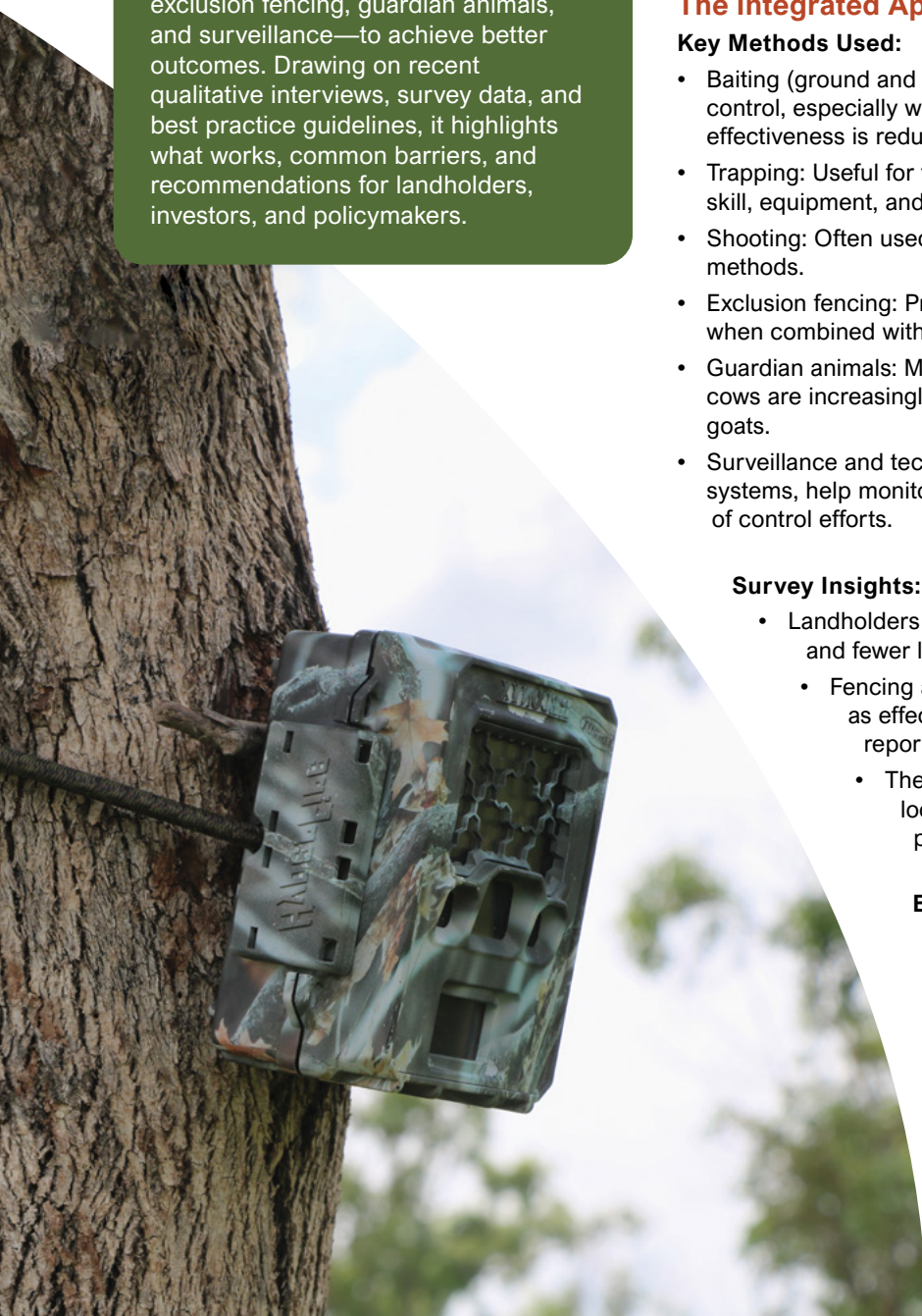### The Integrated Approach: What Does It Look Like?

Key Methods Used:

- Baiting (ground and aerial): Still a cornerstone of wild dog control, especially when coordinated across properties. However, effectiveness is reduced if not all landholders participate.
- Trapping: Useful for targeting specific problem animals, but requires skill, equipment, and time.
- Shooting: Often used opportunistically or as a follow-up to other methods.
- Exclusion fencing: Provides a physical barrier, but is most effective when combined with other controls.
- Guardian animals: Maremma dogs, donkeys, and even protective cows are increasingly used to protect livestock, especially sheep and goats.
- Surveillance and technology: Cameras, including AI-enabled systems, help monitor wild dog activity and evaluate the effectiveness of control efforts.

Survey Insights:

- Landholders who use a mix of methods report better control and fewer losses.
- Fencing and a mix of methods were most commonly cited as effective, while baiting and trapping alone were often reported as ineffective.
- The effectiveness of any method depends on local context, skills, and the level of community participation.

Barriers to Effective Integrated Management

- Skills and Knowledge Gaps: Many landholders, especially new entrants, lack the skills or confidence to use certain methods (e.g., trapping, shooting, or baiting).
- Cost and Access: Some methods, like exclusion fencing or guardian animals, require significant investment.

- **Neighbour Participation:** Control is less effective if neighbours do not participate, leading to reinvasion and frustration.
- **Changing Community Expectations:** Increasing opposition to lethal control methods (e.g., 1080 baiting) in some areas, especially peri-urban and lifestyle regions.
- **Labour Shortages:** Reduced availability of skilled workers and contractors makes it harder to implement some methods.

Voices from the Field

"Implementing all tools available including baiting, trapping, guardian donkeys, shooting while we finish an exclusion fence to try and hold back the tide. Large areas surrounding us of private land that has no control measures being undertaken which means a population is still building around our property." – Survey respondent

"Fencing and proactive baiting is best control." – Survey respondent

"No one wants to trap because they don't have the means of disposal of trapped animals." – Interviewee

"Cluster fencing has fostered greater collaboration among neighbours, though it also requires ongoing cooperation for maintenance and monitoring." – Interviewee

Best Practice Recommendations

- **Use a Suite of Methods:** Tailor the mix of methods to your enterprise, landscape, and resources. Don't rely on a single tool.
- **Coordinate with Neighbours:** Participate in council-run programs and encourage area-wide action for maximum impact.
- **Invest in Skills:** Attend workshops, seek advice from experienced landholders, and use online resources (e.g., PestSmart Toolkit).
- **Monitor and Adapt:** Use cameras and record-keeping to track wild dog activity and the effectiveness of your control efforts.
- **Combine Physical and Behavioural Controls:** Exclusion fencing, guardian animals, and regular surveillance work best when combined with baiting and trapping.
- **Engage with Community:** Address concerns about lethal control by sharing information on animal welfare and non-lethal options.

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