

Non-Lethal Methods and Changing Community Expectations in Wild Dog Management

Executive Summary

Community expectations around wild dog management in Queensland are shifting. There is growing interest in non-lethal methods such as exclusion fencing, guardian animals, and surveillance technologies, especially among peri-urban and new landholders. This case study explores the changing landscape of wild dog control, highlighting the rise of humane approaches, evolving community attitudes, and the implications for councils and landholders.

Introduction

Wild dogs continue to pose a significant threat to livestock and rural livelihoods in Queensland. While traditional control methods such as baiting and trapping remain in use, there is increasing pressure to adopt non-lethal and humane alternatives. This shift is driven by changing community values, social media influence, and the diversification of landholder profiles.

Non-Lethal Methods in Practice

Landholders are increasingly turning to non-lethal methods to manage wild dogs. These include:

- Guardian animals such as Maremma dogs and donkeys
- Exclusion fencing with regular maintenance
- Improved husbandry and paddock design
- Surveillance technologies including cameras and sensors

Survey data shows that many producers have successfully reduced wild dog impacts using these methods. However, effectiveness varies, and some landholders report continued incursions despite non-lethal efforts.

Changing Community Expectations

Community attitudes toward wild dog control are evolving. Peri-urban residents and new landholders often oppose lethal methods, citing animal welfare concerns. Councils report increased complaints about 1080 baiting, and social media has amplified negative perceptions.

Interview data highlights the need for education and engagement to align expectations with practical realities.



Barriers and Limitations

- **Cost and Maintenance:** Exclusion fencing and guardian animals require significant investment and ongoing maintenance.
- **Skills and Knowledge Gaps:** Many new landholders lack the skills to implement or manage non-lethal methods effectively.
- **Variable Effectiveness:** Some wild dogs learn to bypass fences or avoid guardian animals.
- **Community Division:** Differences in values and expectations can create tension between traditional producers and new or peri-urban landholders.

Recommendations

- **Expand education and outreach** on non-lethal methods.
- **Support research and innovation** in humane control options.
- **Engage communities** in collaborative planning and decision-making.
- **Provide clear communication** about council roles and landholder responsibilities.
- **Monitor and evaluate** the effectiveness of non-lethal methods and share success stories.

Voices from the Field

"Guardian animals such as Maremma dogs and donkeys are also being invested in which further increases the risk of 1080 use." – Interviewee

"Periurban dwellers have particular challenges, for example the short time pest animals may spend on their property; humane and hygienic disposal of trapped animals; less exposure to the use of guns for lethal control." – Interviewee

"Many managers of larger landholdings have adopted exclusion fencing as their key defense against wild dogs." – Interviewee

"I use donkeys and maremmas with sheep, wouldn't survive without them. Protective cows for cow herd. I've been using them for over eight years, prior to this I did my own baiting and trapping." – Survey respondent

"My six Maremma guardian dogs keep my sheep and cattle and me safe from the many feral dogs and dingos which operate in this area." – Survey respondent



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>