Dingo and wild dog destruction

A G. Moore
Department of Agriculture

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DINGO AND WILD DOG DESTRUCTION

1—Poisoning in the Breeding Areas

By A. G. MOORE, Government Vermin Control Officer in Charge of Dogging Operations in Southern Areas

It has often been said that poison is the best means of destroying dingoes and wild dogs. Poison acts silently and does not have the frightening effect of trapping. When used properly—on a well-planned system and at the right times—poisoning has given excellent results in controlling the pests.

The secret of success lies in tackling the menace at its source. If all breeding grounds are kept well baited it is possible to control the pests by destroying all the pups.

These breeding grounds are found in outlying country. They are in places such as along rivers or creeks, near springs and around lakes and swamps. They are wherever food and water is most plentiful and where there is sufficient protective cover. It is significant that when new wild dogs move into an area they will usually choose exactly the same places which others have used in the past.

These localities require heavy baiting at least twice in each year and one baiting should always be undertaken in the spring.

TIME TO BAIT

Spring baiting is most important as this is the time when pups will be commencing to fend for themselves and will be searching for food. At this stage the mothers leave food about for the pups to feed upon and they soon acquire the habit of picking up pieces of meat.

NECESSITY FOR WHOLESALE BAITING

Baits should be distributed in a wholesale way each time breeding areas are visited, so that a variety will be available all the year round. As many baits as possible should be left to ensure that if foxes or any other animals or birds take or move baits, some are left for wild dogs.

PREPARATION OF BAITS

Brisket fat has been found to be particularly successful for baiting purposes in the southern districts. If the fat is dried it will keep well in a cool climate. A simple method of drying is to thread the pieces on to fencing wire (with one end sharpened). The wire should be tied between trees or posts in the shade in warm weather and in the sun in cool weather. The fat should be cut into small pieces for baits, each about the size of pennies or 1 in. cubes. Strychnine tablets may be inserted after incisions have been made into the centres of the baits. These tablets each contain half a grain of alkaloid strychnine and, as one-third of a grain will poison any dog, the tablets are very effective. Alkaloid strychnine crystals or powder may be used if no tablets are available.

Suet and meat baits should be used in addition to provide some variety which may tempt wild dogs.

Kangaroos, emus and rabbits form attractive baits. The carcases should be
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cut into pieces and well poisoned. The pieces, particularly arms and legs, should be hung on trees about a foot above the ground. Limbs of trees should be snapped off and the bait skewered on to the “snags” which have been left. It is much preferable to use these meat pieces in this manner than to leave them to rot on the ground. If it is not possible to distribute parts of kangaroos and emus in this way, the whole carcasses should be skinned, opened up, well poisoned and hung on trees.

While any dingoes or wild dogs which are actually attacking sheep will naturally claim first attention, farmers should realise that the places from where the animals are originating must be dealt with. If all infested areas and breeding grounds are regularly poisoned in a wholesale manner with a variety of baits, the numbers of dingoes and wild dogs will be greatly reduced. This applies particularly to pups and, if these are destroyed, eventual control is possible.

The Government doggers will do everything possible to deal with the breeding areas, but it is obviously impossible for them to cover all possible places. Farmers will be helping the doggers, and themselves, if they ensure that their properties, the neighbouring country, and any suspected infested areas which they may be moving through are kept baited.

### DINGO AND WILD DOG DESTRUCTION

The control of dingoes and wild dogs—or any other vermin—is a matter of community effort. It is quite useless for one man to destroy dogs on his property if his neighbours are not doing likewise. Wild dogs will travel long distances—they often have regular beats over big areas—and unless there is a concerted effort against them they will breed up again.

Each property owner should realise the importance of his individual efforts. Regular baiting (augmented by shooting and trapping where necessary) on and about each property in dog-infested areas will do much to save sheep losses and to assist in overall control.

With the Government doggers concentrating on covering the breeding areas away from settlement, and with farmers and Vermin Boards dealing with dogs which are on or near properties, the greatest possible use will be made of the resources available.

The fact that a litter of five or more pups may be expected annually from each pair of dogs should always be remembered and will explain the great emphasis which is placed on keeping the Government doggers working on planned programmes to cover the breeding areas. Their expert knowledge is used to the best advantage in this manner.

Although the number of Government doggers is limited, the State is fortunate in having men with years of experience in this difficult work. Mr. A. G. Moore, the author of this series, is in immediate charge of all dogging operations in the southern areas. He has spent many years in this part of the State on wild dog control work and is recognised as an expert on the subject.

A. R. TOMLINSON,  
Chief Vermin Control Officer.
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