

Background

Wild dogs, which include feral domestic dogs, dingoes and their hybrids, prey on livestock causing significant impact on agricultural production. Methods of control include poisoning with sodium monofluoroacetate (1080), trapping, shooting, exclusion fencing, aversion and use of livestock guarding animals.

Trapping of wild dogs is often used where poison baiting is less effective, for example, in or around lambing paddocks where there is abundant food. Trapping is useful for targeting individual problem animals or as a follow-up after 1080 baiting programs, but is regarded as an inefficient method for general population control.

Cage traps are used to capture problem dogs in urban/residential areas and other areas where it is unacceptable or undesirable to use 1080 or leg-hold traps. Animals trapped in a cage can be transported away from the area for euthanasia. Padded-jaw, leg-hold traps can only be used at sites where the animal can be killed by shooting while still held in the trap. Refer to *DOG001 Trapping of wild dogs using padded-jaw traps*. From an animal welfare perspective, cage traps are preferred over leg-hold traps as fewer injuries are sustained and non-target animals can be released unharmed.

This standard operating procedure (SOP) is a guide only; it does not replace or override the legislation that applies in the relevant State or Territory jurisdiction. The SOP should only be used subject to the applicable legal requirements (including OH&S) operating in the relevant jurisdiction.

Application

- Trapping is time-consuming and labour-intensive and is therefore best suited for control of small populations or problem individuals.
- Traps have the potential to cause significant suffering and distress so should only be used when there is no suitable alternative.
- Humane and successful trapping requires extensive training and experience.
- Selection of appropriate traps and trap sites will maximise chance of capture and minimise the distress caused to target and non-target animals.
- Every effort must be made to avoid target and non-target deaths from factors such as exposure, shock, capture myopathy and predation.
- Before euthanasing a trapped dog, first establish that it is a wild dog, rather than a domestic pet or stray dog. The presence of a collar, identification tag or a microchip would indicate that the dog is likely to be a pet or stray. A dog with a quiet or friendly demeanour is also more likely to be a pet than a wild dog. All dogs caught in residential/urban environments-and any caught elsewhere which show signs indicating that they may be pets or working dogs-should be taken to a pound where they will be scanned for a microchip and

any registration details checked. They may also be held at the pound for a period of time before re-homing or euthanasing. State legislation regarding companion animals varies and should be consulted to determine the operator's obligations with respect to any animals caught. For instance, in some jurisdictions, it may be a legal requirement that ALL trapped dogs are taken to the nearest council pound for assessment.

- Where it has been established that the trapped dog is a wild dog, it should be euthanased in a humane manner. Whenever possible, the dog should be killed with an overdose of barbiturate. This should be performed by an authorised person at an animal shelter, council pound or veterinary surgery. In some situations it may be appropriate to shoot the dog while still in the cage at a site away from urban/residential areas.
- Traps must be used in accordance with relevant State and Territory legislation (*see Appendix 1*). In some States, for example, Western Australia, a permit may be required to trap within certain municipalities.
- Shooting of wild dogs should only be performed by skilled operators who have the necessary experience with firearms and who hold the appropriate licences and accreditation. Storage and transportation of firearms and ammunition must comply with relevant legislation requirements.

Animal Welfare Considerations

Impact on target animals

- Wild dogs are likely to suffer distress from being confined in a cage trap and they can sometimes be injured while trying to escape, although the potential for injury is less than that for leg-hold traps.
- Cage traps can cause extensive injuries to the teeth and mouth of trapped dogs; this is minimised by using a small mesh size (50mm is recommended).
- Traps must be inspected daily to prevent suffering and possible death from exposure, thirst, starvation and/or shock. Traps are best set in the late afternoon and checked the following morning.
- It is preferable to set up traps at sites where vegetation can provide shade and shelter.
- Shade cloth or hessian can be used for protection during extremes of weather. In hot weather, water should be provided and in cold weather bedding should be available inside the cage. Where possible, trapping should be avoided when adverse weather conditions threaten the welfare of trapped animals.
- Captured animals must be approached carefully and quietly to reduce panic, further stress and risk of injury.
- Trapped wild dogs must be euthanased as quickly and humanely as possible.
- If transporting a trapped dog away from the capture site to be euthanased, the cage should be covered with hessian or a blanket to provide shelter from direct sunlight, wind and rain and to minimise stress from visual threats.
- To minimise the animal welfare implications of leaving dependent pups to die a slow death from starvation it is preferable not to undertake trapping when females are whelping, i.e. June to August in temperate areas.
- If lactating bitches are caught in a trap, efforts should be made to find dependent pups. If located they should either be taken to the nearest council

pound or euthanased quickly and humanely depending on legislative requirements.

Impact on non-target animals

- Traps are not target specific; therefore other species such as birds and reptiles may be caught.
- Traps must not be set near areas that are regularly frequented by non-target species.
- Live non-target animals caught in traps must be examined for injuries and signs of illness or distress and dealt with as follows:
 - Animals which are unharmed or have only received minimal injuries such as minor cuts or abrasions should be immediately released at the site of capture.
 - Animals which have more severe injuries or which are suffering from thermal stress should receive appropriate attention. An animal suffering from thermal stress can initially be placed in a suitable quiet holding area which provides warmth or shade to allow recovery before release. Animals with treatable injuries that cannot be immediately released or those failing to recover from thermal stress should be presented to a veterinarian or a registered wildlife carer for treatment.
 - Animals that have injuries which are untreatable or which would compromise their survival in the wild should be euthanased using a technique that is suitable for the species. For more information on euthanasia techniques refer to *GEN001 Methods of Euthanasia*.
- If foxes are caught in the trap they must be euthanased quickly and humanely by a shot to the brain using an appropriate firearm (refer to *FOX006 Trapping of foxes using cage traps*).
- If a cat is caught in the trap, it should be taken to the nearest council pound for assessment. In some States this is a legal requirement. Traps placed in urban/residential areas have a reasonable likelihood of catching owned cats.

Health and Safety Considerations

- Trapped wild dogs are dangerous to handle and can inflict serious bites. If these dogs are shot while still in the cage, there should be no need to handle them directly. However, when handling is necessary, leather gloves and a catching pole should be used. Operators must be protected by tetanus immunisation in case of bite infection.
- Firearms are hazardous. All people should stand well behind the shooter when a dog is being shot. The line of fire must be chosen to prevent accidents or injury from stray bullets or ricochets.
- Care must be taken when handling wild dogs and carcasses as they may carry diseases such as hydatidosis and sarcoptic mange that can affect humans and other animals. A dog with obvious mange should only be handled while wearing gloves. Routinely wash hands after handling all wild dogs and carcasses.

Equipment Required

Traps

- Wire mesh cage traps are used. These can be obtained from commercial suppliers and are available in a variety of sizes eg. a dog-size cage is 120cm x 60cm x 60cm, and made of 2.5 mm welded wire with a mesh size of 50mm. The traps have a spring door that is activated either by a treadle plate or a hook mechanism.

Lures

- Olfactory stimuli such as dog faeces and/or urine, or a commercially prepared lure, eg. synthetic fermented egg, are used to lure wild dogs into the trap.
- The attractiveness of lures will vary with season and location.

Meat baits

- A handful of meat bait is placed inside and also near the trap. Rabbit, chicken, beef, lamb, kangaroo have all been successfully used as bait.
- Attractiveness and palatability of the bait will vary with season and location.

Firearms and ammunition

- Where shooting is the most appropriate means of euthanasia, smaller calibre rifles such as a .22 rimfire or .22 magnum rimfire with hollow/soft point ammunition are recommended.

Procedures

Selection of trap sites

- Traps should be set where the dog is most likely to find and investigate the unfamiliar lure odour, eg. beside regularly used boundary pads, near scent pads and around scratch points.
- The location of all trap sites must be accurately recorded and marked. This information should be readily available to others in case the trapper is unable to return to check traps.
- Do not place in areas where the traps may be interfered with /damaged by large stock or humans.

Placing and setting the trap

- It is preferable to set traps at the end of each day and check early each morning. If traps are left set during the day, they should be checked again in late afternoon.
- Before setting each trap ensure that it is functioning properly.
- Where possible place the traps parallel to objects such as fences, logs or sheds with the rear of the cage against an obstruction to prevent dogs taking the main bait without going into the trap.
- Cage traps should be set squarely on the ground and the doors of the trap bent upward to increase the openness of the trap space.
- Place the meat bait at the rear of the trap, attached to the hook mechanism if present. A second piece of meat is placed at the mouth of the trap.
- Cover the floor of the trap with 3-5cm of soil.
- If using lures place them in suitable positions inside and outside the trap.

- The trap should be pegged to the ground to prevent the animal from tipping it over and injuring itself and/or releasing the trap door.

Euthanasia of wild dogs

Trapped wild dogs can be killed humanely using one the following methods:

- **Overdose of barbiturate**
 - These procedures can only be performed by, or under the direction of, a veterinarian or other authorised person.
 - An intramuscular (neck or back-leg muscles) or subcutaneous injection of a sedative (e.g. xylazine at 1-2 mg/kg) may be necessary to restrain the animal before euthanasing. The injection can sometimes be administered to the dog through the wire mesh without the dog being handled. This is easier to perform if the cage has a ‘crush’ or ‘squeeze-back’ to restrain the dog at one end of the cage.
 - Once the dog is sedated it is euthanased with an intravenous or intraperitoneal injection of pentobarbitone sodium (approximately 150mg/kg).
- **Shooting**
 - In some situations trapped wild dogs may have to be euthanased by shooting whilst still held in the cage trap.
 - Unnecessary people should keep away from the area to allow the dog to become less agitated. The shooter should approach the animal in a calm and quiet manner.
 - To maximise the impact of the shot and to minimise the risk of misdirection the range should be as short as possible i.e. 5-20 cm from the head.
 - Never fire when the dog is moving its head. Be patient and wait until the dog is motionless before shooting. Accuracy is important to achieve a humane death. One shot should ensure instantaneous loss of consciousness and rapid death without resumption of consciousness.
 - Shots must be aimed to destroy the major centres at the back of the brain near the spinal cord. This can be achieved by one of the following methods (*see diagrams in Appendix 2*):

Frontal position (front view)

The firearm is aimed at a point midway between the level of the eyes and the base of the ears, but slightly off to one side so as to miss the bony ridge that runs down the middle of the skull. The aim should be slightly across the centreline of the skull and towards the spine.

Temporal position (side view)

The firearm is aimed horizontally at the side of the head at a point midway between the eye and the base of the ear.

- Death of shot animals should always be confirmed by observing the following:
 - Absence of rhythmic, respiratory movements;
 - Absence of eye protection reflex (corneal reflex) or ‘blink’;
 - A fixed, glazed expression in the eyes; and

- Loss of colour in mucous membranes (become mottled and pale without refill after pressure is applied).

If death cannot be verified, a second shot to the head should be taken immediately.

Further Information

Contact the relevant Commonwealth, State or Territory government agency from the following list of websites:

Commonwealth	Department of Environment and Heritage http://www.deh.gov.au/
ACT	Environment ACT http://www.environment.act.gov.au/
NSW	NSW Agriculture www.agric.nsw.gov.au
NT	Parks & Wildlife Commission www.nt.gov.au/ipe/pwcnt/
QLD	Department of Natural Resources and Mines www.nrm.qld.gov.au
SA	Animal & Plant Control Commission http://sustainableresources.pir.sa.gov.au
TAS	Department of Primary Industries, Water & Environment www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au
VIC	Department of Primary Industries, Agriculture & Food www.dpi.vic.gov.au
WA	Agriculture WA www.agric.wa.gov.au

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Appendix 1: Relevant State and Territory animal welfare and related legislation relevant to the use of traps

- **New South Wales**
Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979
Use of steel-jaw traps is prohibited. Trapping with padded-jaw traps, cage traps and treadle snares is permitted.
- **Queensland**
Animal Care and Protection Act 2001
Steel-jaw traps are *not* prohibited traps.
- **Australian Capital Territory**
Animal Welfare Act 1992
Use of steel-jaw traps is prohibited. Trapping with padded-jaw traps, cage traps and treadle snares is permitted.
- **Northern Territory**
Animal Welfare Act 2000
Use of steel-jaw traps is prohibited. Trapping with padded-jaw traps is permitted.
- **Tasmania**
Animal Welfare Act 1993
Leg-hold traps and snares are prohibited.
- **South Australia**
Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1985
Small steel-jaw traps are prohibited. Large steel-jaw traps are prohibited in most areas except for wild dog control along the dingo fence and for research purposes. The large steel-jaw traps are required to be bound with cloth soaked strychnine or modified.
- **Victoria**
Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986
Large steel-jaw traps and neck snares are prohibited, with exceptions for wild dog control in some areas. Snares and padded-jaw traps are permitted, and small steel-jaw traps are permitted for rabbit control.
- **Western Australia**
Animal Welfare Act 2002
Agriculture and Related Resources Protection (Traps) Regulations 1982
Steel-jaw traps are permitted for wild dog control. The jaws must be bound with a cloth soaked in strychnine. Only padded steel jawed traps are permitted for fox control and use in research programs. Permits are required to set traps in metropolitan areas. Neck snares are illegal.

Appendix 2: Recommended aiming points for shooting

Recommended shot placements - Wild dog

Diagram 1

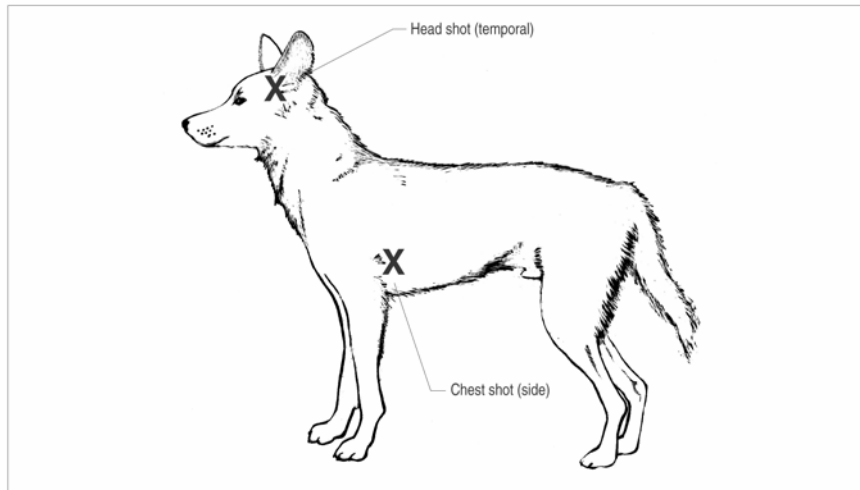


Diagram 2 - Side view (skeleton)

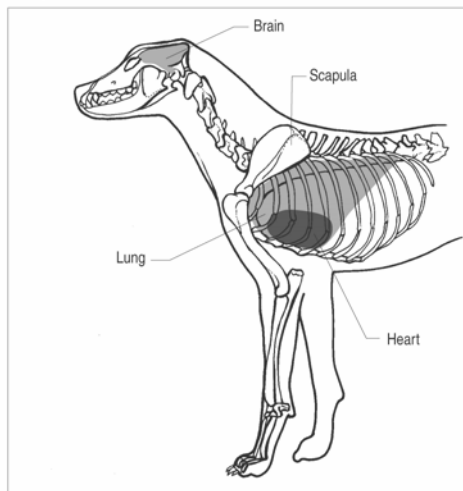


Diagram 3 - Head shot (frontal)



Note: Head shots (temporal or frontal) should be used for shooting wild dogs caught in traps. See text for details.