

7<sup>th</sup> April 2005

Kylie Weston Scheuber  
Federal Standing Committee – Inquiry into the Impact on Agriculture of Pest Animals  
Canberra

RE: Wild Dog Problem in NE Goldfields.

Our family has lost 5,600 sheep to wild dog predation in the last 3 years. Since the first significant losses were felt in 2003 we have spent 3 days of every week, just trapping and baiting. If we didn't, we wouldn't have any sheep left at all by now. Over 100 dogs have been trapped on our property alone, and the figures for some of our neighbours are similar.

Wonganoo has produced good quality wool since its beginnings in 1925. The previous worst year for dogs was in my father-in-law's time, when he trapped 37. Due solely to the prevalence and impact of wild dogs we have been forced out of wool and into cattle, which are a less reliable and longer term source of income.

### **Financial Impact on our Operation**

#### **2002-2003:**

2,880 sheep lost to dog predation.

Equates to 60-70 bales wool valued at \$63,000 - \$73,500 plus  
2,880 sheep at \$40/head minimum - \$115,200 plus  
potential income from lambs and sale sheep.

#### **2003-2004:**

1,400 sheep at \$35/head min. \$49,000 plus  
35 bales wool \$25,000 plus  
lambs and sale sheep plus  
Wool that would have been shorn from sheep and lambs from previous year.

#### **2004-2005:**

Expected to be similar to last year. We shear on 18<sup>th</sup> April.

Lamb mortality has been almost 100% for the last 3 years.

We will have to make costly changes to infrastructure to run cattle.

### **Causes of Rising Dog Numbers**

Several factors have led to the blow out in wild dog numbers:

- A run of good seasons to the north of us, in cattle country
- Changes in ownership of neighboring stations, with newcomers being inexperienced in dog control
- A reliance on aerial baiting

- The gradual phasing out of government doggers
- A belief by some cattle producers that dog attacks on calves are insignificant
- The recent hand over of all unallocated Crown land to CALM without a corresponding increase in resources to manage feral animals on the land
- The refusal of some leaseholders to abide by their responsibility to control feral pests.

**This area is one of the ‘hot spots’ of the State which needs urgent attention if the wild dog problem is to be prevented from spreading any further south.**

**Wonganoo is the last sheep station going north before the cattle country begins, and the last station going east before crown land stretches all the way to the SA border.**

Our dogging group has been operating for 10 months and in that time the dogger has trapped/shot **117 dogs**. The majority have been on the cattle stations to the north of us.

The group includes **Wongawol and Prenti Downs Stations**, and to access Prenti Downs the dogger travels through **Windidda Station**, which is not part of our group. Evidence of wild dogs is rife through this property, and it is a breeding ground for what will eventually be dogs migrating into stations in the group. *A concentrated eradication program is urgently needed on Windidda to lessen the pressure on our group.*

One man trying to patrol the vast area encompassed by our group and make an impact on the dog population, is only scratching the surface.

**We would like to make the following recommendations:**

**1. That government doggers be deployed in the field once more, to patrol the ‘buffer zones’ around pastoral land.**

No matter how much control pastoralists exercise within their lease boundaries, if dogs are breeding on the other side in Crown or CALM land and moving into the vacuum created by this control, the pastoralist is effectively doing all the work.

**2. That all Government agencies involved in the industry be given sufficient power to ensure ALL leaseholders abide by their responsibilities to control feral animals on their land.**

Besides the land managers mentioned in Recommendation 1, there are some private leaseholders openly flouting the conditions of their lease, refusing to participate in aerial baiting programs or any other form of control. Their thriving dog populations eventually become their neighbours’ problem.

**3. That a bounty be immediately introduced for the NE Goldfields region.**

There are so many dogs in the area at the moment that a fast-knockdown is needed to regain a manageable level. An incentive such as a scalp bounty may encourage people living and working in the area to target wild dogs.

The trial bounty of \$20 per scalp which ran for six months in the Laverton Shire was a failure because the amount was too low, and there are very few leases with sheep in that Shire. We recommend an amount of \$100.

**4. That continuing financial support be provided for Declared Animal Groups in Zone 9.**

Each year the Kalgoorlie ZCA has to decide how best to allocate funding among its various interest groups, and each year it is a battle to make the funding go far enough. Last year all dogging groups were allocated \$40,000, which is only enough to employ a full-time dogger for 6 months.

Some areas may only require a part-time dogger if dog activity is spasmodic, but our situation remains constant until the number of dogs is drastically reduced.

Kathy and Malcolm Boladeras  
Wonganoo Station.