



Wild dog policy and legislation considerations

Legal status and management:

Wild dogs are identified by the national *Invasive Plants and Animals Committee (IPAC)* as a 'Extreme (P) Threat Category' species. This indicates that no IPAC endorsed risk assessment has been conducted and that the Extreme Threat Category has been allocated in recognition of the precautionary principle. Wild dogs are also identified as a pest animal under the *Australian Pest Animal Strategy*.

Because of these classifications, wild dog management can be constrained by legislation and policy, with various guidelines, codes of practice, and standard operating procedures applying. Legislation and policy often vary between jurisdictions at local and state levels, with overriding federal laws also affecting wild dog management. There are also other more generic Acts that function across jurisdictions. Violation of laws related to wild dog management can attract serious penalties (eg fines and jail time) for individuals and agencies. In general, the following types of regulations should be considered before beginning any wild dog management activity.

Laws relating to animal welfare:

There are laws in every state and territory that address the need to treat all animals humanely, whether they are considered pests or not. People managing wild dogs are obligated to use control methods that minimise any potential pain, fear or distress. These obligations encompass a wide range of activities from the capture and relocation of animals, through to poisoning, shooting or trapping. Codes of practice, standard operating procedures, and best-practice guidelines for the management of wild dogs have been developed, are publically available, and should be followed in order to prevent cruelty to animals during control operations.

Laws relating to land tenure:

The legal status of wild dogs varies with different land tenures. In many cases, wild dogs are a 'protected species' in national parks and conservation reserves, while they are considered 'declared pests' in many livestock production areas. Listing wild dogs as protected or declared places certain restrictions and obligations



Image: Ben Allen

on those intending to manage wild dogs in a given area. Certain management activities are not legally permissible on all tenures. Permission to access various land tenures should also be considered.

Laws relating to the conservation status of specific wild dog populations:

Laws can sometimes vary between specific populations or types of wild dog. For example, an isolated island population (such as those on Fraser Island) might be considered a unique natural asset worthy of conservation. Alternatively, people might want to only conserve pure dingoes but eliminate impure hybrids and feral dogs. Because it can be hard to identify the purity of an individual wild dog just from how it looks, land tenure (or the expected location of important populations) is often used to define areas where different restrictions apply. For example, controlling all wild dogs (pure or otherwise) may be allowed along the boundaries of some conservation reserves, while core areas within a reserve may be set aside for wild dog conservation.

Laws relating to the use of specific control techniques:

Various control techniques are also often governed by laws independent of their use on wild dogs. For example, there is specific legislation dealing with the use of firearms, which are often used to euthanise wild dogs in trapping or shooting programs. Various laws also govern the use of poisons and other veterinary drugs used to kill or safely handle wild dogs. Many of these chemicals have label instructions and directions for use that are legally binding. Wild dog managers are not freed from obligations under these laws even when other obligations (such as animal welfare and land tenure considerations) have been met.



Laws relating to the use of animals for research and teaching:

Not all wild dog management activities require the destruction of animals, and alternative legislation governs the use of animals for researching and teaching purposes. Some wild dog management activities might be considered 'research and teaching activities' in some jurisdictions, such as the systematic use of infra-red trail cameras or attaching tracking collars to wild dogs. If this is the case, various additional permits and approvals may be required before management activities can begin.

Laws relating to the keeping, sale, and movement of wild dogs:

Because wild dogs may be considered protected or declared, native or introduced, or a risk to livestock or not, laws differ between jurisdictions with respect to the keeping, sale and movement of wild dogs. Different states and territories may or may not allow the keeping of wild dogs as pets and in some cases, although allowed in one area of a state, wild dogs may not be transported to or kept within another area of the state or tenure. Wild dogs may be seized and euthanised if they are being kept illegally.

Legal obligations on owners of land where wild dogs occur:

The responsibility to manage wild dogs rests largely with the owners or managers of the land where wild dogs occur. This presents challenges in places where wild dogs roam between multiple properties, and these are usually sorted out through community wild dog management plans. In places where wild dogs are considered pests, landowners have a responsibility to control wild dogs on their land and prevent them from causing problems on neighbouring lands. On lands where wild dog conservation measures are applied, managers have a responsibility to ensure that wild dogs are not leaving those lands or causing problems in adjacent areas.

These obligations apply to private, leased and crown lands. There are likely to be penalties for people and agencies that do not abide by the rules.

EPBC Act considerations:

The [Environment Protection and Biodiversity](#)

“ Where wild dogs are considered pests, landowners have a responsibility to control them on their land and prevent them from causing problems on neighbouring lands ”



Image: Kathleen Davies

[Conservation \(EPBC\) Act 1999](#) oversees the management of vulnerable and endangered native species, populations and ecological communities. The EPBC Act lists all the native species currently at risk from a variety of factors. The EPBC Act also lists the key threatening processes (KTP) known to affect threatened species. Predation by wild dogs has not been recognised as a KTP in national legislation but is recognised as such in New South Wales. Important to the management of wild dogs, all new wild dog control programs must be reviewed under the EPBC Act before they are put in place, to assess the program's risk to threatened species in the area. For example, if wild dog control is to begin in a national park where control has not taken place previously, the proposal must be assessed before it can start.

Further information:

- For EPBC Act requirements, visit www.environment.gov.au/epbc/approval.html
- For details on the New South Wales KTP, see: R Major (2009) Predation and Hybridisation by Feral Dogs (*Canis lupus familiaris*) - key threatening process listing, New South Wales Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (www.environment.nsw.gov.au/determinations/feraldogsFD.htm)
- A greater level of detail can also be found in state and local wild dog management plans, which can be accessed at www.pestsmart.org.au

Invasive Animals Ltd has taken care to validate the accuracy of the information at the date of publication [July 2016]. This information has been prepared with care but it is provided "as is", without warranty of any kind, to the extent permitted by law.



PestSmart Toolkit