QON No. 190

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2024-2025
Ms Nicole Lawder MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),
Miss Laura Nuttall MLA

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by: Ms Nicole Lawder MLA

Addressed to: Minister for the Environment, Parks and Land Management

Redirection: N/A

Reference: Environment

Hearing Date: 31/07/2024

In relation to: Wild dogs/dingoes

Question Lodgement Date: 01/08/2024

Date Answer Due: 08/08/2024

(1) Has the research and consultation (outlined by the government response to the 2023-24 Estimates Recommendation 67 suggested reclassifying 'wild dog' terminology to 'dingo' to reflect their genetic makeup) taken place? Has it been successful and they have been recognised as native animals?

(2) Has the government prioritised more robust infrastructure and management strategies in Namadgi National Park to handle the current dingo population before considering any changes in classification or management strategies?

(3) Can you provide a detailed plan for how the government intends to consult with and support rural landholders who will be directly affected by any proposed reclassification and any subsequent changes to wild dog control measures?

(4) How will the government address the inconsistencies in current legislation and management practices to ensure a coherent and effective approach to wild dog control that balances ecological, cultural, and agricultural interests?

Rebecca Vassarotti MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) The ACT Government has had 20 samples of wild dogs/dingoes from the impact mitigation program in and around Namadgi National Park analysed using a genetic method developed in recent years by Dr Kylie Cairns of University of New South Wales and collaborators. This technique is much more specific and comprehensive than previous techniques, covering almost 200,000 locations on the genome.

This test found that all dogs sampled were Dingo, with no evidence of hybridisation with domestic dogs detected. This result is in line with 2023 results published by Dr Cairns and collaborators, finding wild dog populations nationwide have much lower levels of domestic dog hybridisation than previously thought.

On the basis of this research and other considerations, including advice from the ACT Scientific Committee, the ACT Government has plans to recognise the Dingo in its own right and distinct to a Wild Dog. This will require removing Dingo from listing under the Pest Plants and Animals Act, while ensuring appropriate arrangements are in place to continue management of Dingoes to mitigate their impacts. The Government is in the early stages of planning this work.

(2) Whilst the ACT Government is planning to recognise the Dingo in its own right, the Government has no plans at this time to change existing control and management approaches. The current impact mitigation program utilises various control methods that are considered best practice and continually looks to improve how impacts of Dingoes can be prevented or reduced. This includes lethal and non-lethal management options.

(3) The ACT Government has and will continue to consult with rural landholders about the plans to recognise Dingos as distinct from Wild Dogs and the associated policy pathway for this to occur. The Minister for the Environment, Parks and Land Management, and Government conservation officials have participated in online and face to face meetings with rural landholders.

(4) The ACT Government, through the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, is planning to commence work this financial year on a Discussion Paper to review science, policy, management approaches and stakeholder views in this area. The information obtained through the discussion paper will form the basis for the Conservator of Flora and Fauna to develop a Controlled Native Species Management Plan. A Controlled Native Species Management Plan for the Dingo will enable an appropriate way forward to ensure a coherent and effective approach to dingo management, which effectively balances ecological, cultural, and agricultural interests.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2024-2025

Signature: Date: 7/5/2024

By the Minister for the Environment, Parks and Land Management, Rebecca Vassarotti MLA