



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2022-2023

Mr James Milligan MLA (Chair), Mr Andrew Braddock MLA (Deputy Chair),
Dr Marisa Paterson MLA

ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE DURING PUBLIC HEARINGS

Asked by Ms Nicole Lawder on 2 September 2022: Mr Bren Burkevics took on notice the following question(s):

Ref: Uncorrected Proof Transcript 2 September 2022

In relation to Feral Animal Management:

MS LAWDER: It does cause a pretty ugly death—1080 bait. Are there any alternatives?

Mr Burkevics: As I mentioned, the other alternative which is quite effective is trapping, and that is a safe and humane measure to manage wild dogs. We have a wild dog trapper and, through government investment, there is additional enhancement happening in relation to wild dog management in Namagi National Park. A full-time trapper we have used with assistance from New South Wales on several occasions, as well as contract, with regard to trapping.

From memory, over the last year, there have been about three wild dogs caught following some instances in New South Wales just close in the border, so in my senses there is a very reasonable program that is happening at the moment that balances both the recognition that wild dogs do play across the nation value, or a top-order predator value, as well as balancing the potential impacts on rural lessees to the east and south of Namagi National Park. We have regular liaisons with those rural lessees, and they have given their clear assistance to the ACT for wild dog control.

MS LAWDER: Thanks. Can you outline the process? Do you start with non-poisoned meat to attract the dingos and wild dogs and then move on to baiting? How is the process—

Mr Burkevics: We are straying into very operational territory and, in my three months in the role, I have not had the opportunity yet to venture into the depths of the program. But I think it is fair to say that we apply the practices recommended by the manufacturer of 1080, and they are available online, to deliver the baiting program. Just to pick up your point about causing a poor death to the animal, I would need to seek advice on that. I am not confident on that. I would need to seek advice, according to the manufacturer and my own observations and experiences, but I think it is fair to say that we apply the manufacturer's recommended approach to the delivery of 1080.

MS LAWDER: It is my understanding that the RSPCA have long been against the use of 1080. Not long ago, we talked about the RSPCA's support on the way the kangaroo cull is carried out, so why is it that we value the views of the RSPCA in one area of the conservation portfolio but not in the other area?

Ms Vassarotti: I do not think it would be fair to say that we do not value the RSPCA's views. We absolutely value the RSPCA's views. One of the challenges is around balancing the raise of risks and also the opportunities for alternative practices. The use of poisons across the environment is something that, as a government, we are really looking at in terms of what we can do and how we can minimise impacts in the environment. An example of that is that I was recently on the public record talking about the issue of rodenticides, for instance, and particularly the impact of second-generation rodenticides on wildlife. It is really looking at the range of tools that we have in the toolbox.

In the area of wild dog management, we are constrained at times with the limitations of the number of tools within the toolbox, but we continue to work on ways that we can manage evasive species and pests in the environment in a way that is most humane.

REBECCA VASSAROTTI MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1080 or Sodium fluoracetate is used in strict accordance with the conditions set by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), it is currently an essential tool in conservation and pest animal control programs.

1080 is a naturally-occurring toxin that is safe in the environment, as it dilutes into harmless compounds in water and gets eaten by the bacteria in the soil. Many of Australia's native wildlife have a natural tolerance to sodium fluoroacetate, unlike introduced species.

The ACT is signatory to three cooperative wild dog plans that cover parts of the ACT and NSW. These plans include control obligations using poison meat baits. Meat baits are injected with a measured dose of 1080 and buried along pre-determined bait lines. Burying the bait minimises the taking of baits by native species. Baiting is implemented according to an annual plan; the program uses the minimum number of baits to achieve the reduction in impacts.

Wild dogs/dingoes are also trapped using soft jaw traps. All trapping is carried out in line with welfare codes of practice. Control work only occurs in areas towards the periphery of Namadgi National Park or Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, where dingoes are likely to be traveling onto adjacent properties where livestock are impacted, and the dog trapper works closely with landholders to plan trapping.

The RSPCA's views on 1080 can be found at <https://rspca.org.au/>. The RSPCA recognises the need to control certain species to reduce both environmental and agricultural impacts. However, the RSPCA encourages jurisdictions to explore as humane methods as possible.

EPSDD pest animal control programs will continue to trial alternative methods as they become approved by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA).

Since 2020, programs targeting feral pigs have used sodium nitrate as an alternative to 1080. Where this has shown positive uptake and control potential it will replace 1080. Currently sodium nitrate is being successfully used instead of 1080 for feral pigs across Namadgi National Park. The approved delivery method requires the animal to lift the lid of a hopper feeding device.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2022-2023

Signature: 

Date: 9/9/2022

By the Minister for the Environment, Rebecca Vassarotti MLA