

Wild dog facts

Animal welfare

The *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001* provides for the control of pest animals only when the control is done in a way that causes the animal as little pain as is reasonable.

The Model Code of Practice for the Humane Control of Wild Dogs

(<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/publications/humane-control.html>) provides guidance on humane control and promotes the importance of ensuring control efforts are effective and targeted.

The Model Code evaluates the humaneness of different control methods.

Exclusion fencing is generally regarded as a humane, non-lethal alternative to lethal control methods. Although exclusion fencing acts as a barrier to wild dogs it can have negative effects on non-target species by altering dispersion and foraging patterns, and can also be a hazard to wildlife during bushfire.

Guardian animals are also seen as a humane alternative or adjunct to conventional lethal wild dog control. Owners must ensure guardian animals are well cared for.

Poisoning from 1080 is typified by severe central nervous system dysfunction, convulsions, hyperexcitability, vocalising and ultimately respiratory failure. Although the humaneness of 1080 is not yet fully understood, it is thought that during the initial onset of signs (e.g. manic running, vocalising, retching); the animal is likely to be conscious and capable of suffering distress and possibly pain. However, during the latter stages, when the animal shows signs of central nervous system dysfunction including collapse, convulsions and tetanic spasms, suffering may not occur.

Strychnine is considered inhumane because the affected animals remain conscious and appear to suffer pain and anxiety from the onset of clinical signs which include violent muscle spasms through to death from asphyxia and exhaustion. Humans who have been poisoned with strychnine report intense pain. Although it is relatively quick acting (death usually occurs around 1–2 hours after ingestion), strychnine is considered less humane in its action than 1080. Until a more humane alternative becomes available strychnine can be used on the jaws of leg-hold traps to expedite the death of trapped dogs in remote areas where it is impossible to check traps daily. These traps should be checked as regularly as possible.

Shooting can be a humane method of destroying wild dogs when it is carried out by experienced, skilled and responsible shooters. Wounded dogs must be located and dispatched as quickly and humanely as possible. If lactating females are shot, efforts should be made to find dependent pups and kill them quickly and humanely.

Trapping causes pain and distress. Methods to increase animal welfare outcomes during trapping:

- (1) Match trap size to foot size – foothold traps
Fitting the size of the trap to the size of the animals' foot (foot-hold rather than leg-hold) and reducing the overall weight provides for a more comfortable captivity for the animal while greatly reducing possible injuries.
- (2) Trap configuration
Most new foothold traps come from the manufacturer either already having some modification or requiring some form of modification by the purchaser. Examples of modification include:
 - padded or rubber jaw inserts
 - offset jaws

- lamination, (expanding the thickness of the trap jaw by 6-10 mm)
- addition of two extra springs (four-coiling)
- reinforcement of the base plate
- addition of swivels, shock springs double staking devices and trigger systems.

These modifications have been developed to increase the effectiveness, efficiency, species specificity and reduce stress and injury to the target species.

- (3) Traps should be set in areas that are protected from environmental extremes and checked regularly. Traps set in the evening should be checked the next morning or monitoring systems should be used. Lethal traps using strychnine should be used in remote areas where it is impossible to check the traps daily.

Control methods in development

Cyanide ejectors (undergoing registration) are considered humane as they provide rapid loss of consciousness and death with minimal suffering. Para-aminopropiophenone (PAPP), an experimental toxin is considered more humane than 1080 and is also undergoing registration for use.

Euthanasing animals

Euthanasia is defined as:

- *the humane destruction of an animal by a method that produces rapid unconsciousness and subsequent death without evidence of pain or distress.*

This concept should be remembered when using any method to destroy pest animals, either directly or after they have been captured. Control techniques should therefore result in the direct death of an animal (e.g. by shooting or poisoning), or initial live capture (e.g. using foot-hold traps) followed by prompt destruction.

Choosing a 'reasonable' control technique

When choosing a control technique the operator must balance the effectiveness of the technique, its humaneness, and public safety.

Visit www.feral.org.au for Relative Humaneness of wild dog control techniques.

Confirming that an animal is dead

When euthanasing an animal, it is important to check that the animal is dead before leaving the site. Signs of death include:

- absence of respiratory movement
- absence of heartbeat
- loss of colour in mucous membranes
- glazing of the eyes and loss of corneal and blinking reflexes. The eye should remain open and the lids should not move.

Further information

Further information is available from your local government office, or by contacting Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or visit our website at www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au.

