



SUBMISSION

11 September 2024

The Hon. Ros Spence
Minister for Agriculture
Victoria State Government
Level 22, 50 Lonsdale Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

The Hon. Steve Dimopoulos
Minister for Environment
Victoria State Government
Level 22, 50 Lonsdale Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Via email: dingo.review@agriculture.vic.gov.au; trevor.x.pisciotta@agriculture.vic.gov.au

Dear Ministers

Re: Dingo conservation and management review

Livestock SA is the peak industry organisation for South Australia's red meat and wool producers. Representing over 5,200 sheep producers and more than 2,700 beef cattle producers across the state, we work to secure a strong and sustainable livestock sector. South Australia's \$4.3 billion livestock industry is a key economic contributor to the state which supports 21,000 South Australian jobs across the red meat and wool industries.

Livestock SA welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the review of the policy and regulatory settings for dingo conservation and livestock predation management in Victoria, which is important to our members and industry.

In South Australia we have experienced the devastating outcomes of not properly managing dingoes/wild dogs (wild dogs) in sheep producing areas. The state now has an integrated approach to wild dog management activities, which has resulted in reduced numbers inside the SA Dog Fence and given producers the confidence to expand their sheep operations. This has been positive for jobs and regional economies, and more importantly, producer wellbeing.

South Australian producers along the border region of Victoria and New South Wales suffer impacts from wild dogs that traverse the border region. This will only get worse if Victoria protects the dingo. As outlined in my letter to Minister Spence on 19 July 2024 (enclosed), the unilateral decision by the Victorian Government to immediately remake the dingo unprotection order in north-west Victoria due to new scientific information that had not been peer reviewed, has been particularly concerning.

The potential impact of this matter for sheep production in border regions has resulted in it being frequently discussed by industry and government stakeholders in our state. As such, you may receive similar feedback from other South Australian stakeholders, and I urge you to consider the significance of the aligned industry and government feedback.

Poor process

The Victorian Government's Public Engagement Framework 2021-25 commits to meaningful, principled and inclusive public engagement to support better decisions for all parts of government. It is disappointing that the process to review the policy and regulatory settings for dingo conservation and livestock predation management in Victoria does not align with any of the engagement principles outlined in this framework.

Undermining South Australian industry and government investments

The South Australian sheep industry is worth over \$1.5 billion to the economy and employs 15,000 people. Industry and government have made significant investments over a long period of time to ensure the industry continues to prosper. A key piece of infrastructure underpinning the industry is the SA Dog Fence, which separates sheep from wild dogs and dingoes.

The decision to stop dingo control in northwest Victoria has undermined these investments. The \$27.4 million Dog Fence Rebuild Project and a combination of wild dog controls enacted since 2018, including aerial and ground baiting, professional trapper program, and workshops and training, have driven the wild dog population to historic lows and has enabled producers to restock sheep across more than 18,000 square kilometres of pastoral land.

These activities return millions of dollars to the economy and support employment of thousands of South Australians in the state's regional communities. The control of dingoes, foxes, and cats in the Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park has also enabled reintroduced native species, such as quolls and possums, to thrive. Dingoes are known to prey on many threatened species of mammals, birds, and reptiles. Their protection undermines biodiversity protection initiatives, including efforts to conserve malleefowl, a nationally threatened species, in Ngarkat Conservation Park (SA) and the Wyperfeld and Big Desert parks (Vic).

Robustness of the scientific research

Livestock SA understand that the decision to stop dingo control in northwest Victoria relies on dingo population modelling that is not publicly available, nor peer reviewed. We also understand that the South Australian Government has made repeated requests to view the data, which have been declined.

We have been made aware that the decision in northwest Victoria was based on as little as two dingo sightings and that the population models used 'distance sampling' methods to estimate a population of between 40 to 230 individuals. We have also been advised that it's likely that several assumptions of this model were disregarded. As such, we hold concerns about the transparency, accountability and confidence attributed to the results.

Influence of dingo advocacy groups

Livestock SA supports policy decisions that are based on science, evidence and real-world experience. We understand that while dingoes do kill kangaroos and suppress feral goat populations, their ecological roles are often inflated by advocacy groups and DEECA. Claims that they suppress cats and foxes have been repeatedly disproved in the scientific literature. Conversely, dingoes prey on many native species, including threatened and culturally significant species, which should be considered and form part of the information available about the assessment of the impact of dingoes.

We also support a nationally harmonised approach to pest management and remain confused and concerned that Victoria, unlike all other jurisdictions in Australia, does not use the accepted nomenclature for dingoes, which defines them as a breed of domestic dog called *Canis familiaris*. Treating dingoes as *Canis lupus dingo* is contrary to the scientific consensus and at odds with Museums Victoria, which was previously relied upon as Victoria's taxonomic authority.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to this review. Please contact the Livestock SA office on (08) 8297 2299 or via email at admin@livestocksa.org.au if you would like to discuss this submission further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Travis Tobin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Travis Tobin
Chief Executive Officer

Encl. (1)