

## Long-term research underway to unravel dingo dilemma

Researchers with the Invasive Animals CRC have just published [a critical review of dingo research methodology in \*Biological Conservation\*](#), which identifies the need for long-term research on the ecological roles of dingoes and other free ranging dogs.



Credit: scienceimage

CRC researcher, Peter Fleming, said that, depending on what they are eating at the time, free-ranging dogs are viewed differently by people.

For some, they are destructive pests attacking sheep and cattle. For others, dingoes are seen as an ‘under-utilised weapon’ against feral cats and foxes (collectively referred to as meso-predators). According to Fleming, there is much uncertainty about potential meso-predator suppression by free-ranging dogs, including dingoes.

‘It’s critically important that we manage the negative impacts of free-ranging dogs using the most up-to-date scientific information,’ Fleming said.

‘Right now, pressure is being brought to bear on livestock producers in some areas to reduce lethal control of all free-ranging dogs because of potential environmental benefit of dingoes.

‘We know wild dogs and sheep don’t mix and that strategic co-management is the best way to go for both conservation and agricultural goals. Community wild dog control programs in livestock production areas can suffer because of conflicting information about the roles of dingoes and the other free-ranging wild dogs.

‘However, our review shows we are unsure what the ecological roles are. The new research may yet demonstrate there are ecosystem services and net benefits of retaining free-ranging wild dogs to suppress foxes and feral cat impacts in some areas, but they will still need to be controlled for livestock protection’.

The Invasive Animals CRC in partnership with Australian Wool Innovation and Meat & Livestock Australia has embarked on a five-year research program to enhance the nation’s ability to manage all wild dog impacts.

Based at the University of New England and Biosecurity NSW, the research program will centre on north-east NSW and south-east Qld, a biodiversity hotspot but where livestock producers continue to suffer predation problems.

‘In five years time we will have a sound understanding of the relationships between the predators, prey, plants and people in the highly-productive north-east NSW,’ Fleming said. ‘In the meantime, the coordinated, strategic approach to managing free-ranging dogs and preventing livestock predation must continue.’

Source: Invasive Animals CRC

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