

Producer guide for increased lamb survival through better predator management

Predator management and lamb survival data capture

The importance of predator management

Predator numbers can build quickly such as in response to the availability of a feed source. Once predator numbers grow, their feed source will need to be maintained to sustain them which can mean predators will need to move into new territory in search of food. This could be onto your farm and your young lambs, or it could be into native reserves where they will prey on native animals.

The proper management of predator numbers can reduce their impact on both native animals and livestock.

Understanding predator behavior

It is important to understand the behavior of different predators. For example, wild dogs prefer to take paths of least resistance and ridgelines, whereas foxes prefer to take paths along secluded or lower-lying areas such as creeks and drainage lines.

Depending on the predator of concern, different areas or zones within a property should be chosen to place baits in order to be more effective in controlling that particular species.

This can vastly reduce the amount of time spent on predator control activities, while maximizing the results obtained.

Key outcomes

- Predator Control Management Plans (PCMPs) save time and improve the effectiveness of baiting campaigns.
- Lamb survival can be improved with combined predator and ewe management practices.
- The FeralScan app can help improve predator management efficiency.

Things to consider

- key date to implement your PCMP
- animal health considerations
- paddocks for twin and single bearing ewes.
- Staff training



Image 1: David Klippel, DEECA Senior Wild Dog Controller, demonstrating to producers the procedure for setting a trap.

Preparing lambing areas

There are many considerations when preparing paddocks for lambing in order to maximise lamb survival. These include scanning ewes and separating ewes based on single, twin or triplet, feed on offer (FOO), ewe body condition score (BCS), and animal health such as vaccinations for disease and deficiency. Other factors considered important are shelter from inclement weather, paddock and mob size, and privacy.

Predator management techniques

There are several management techniques useful for predator management. These can be broadly grouped into lethal, deterrent or avoidance techniques.

Depending on the predator being targeted and the preferences of the livestock manager, one or more of the following techniques may be employed. The main techniques for each broad category are listed below:

Monitoring: Remote activated field cameras and sensors, drones and thermal optics

Lethal: Trapping and Shooting and baiting/fumigating

Deterrent: Lights, alarms, guard animals, drones

Avoidance: Exclusion fencing, housing or enclosing

Timing predator management strategies

Pre-lambing: Studies have shown that when a predator management program is in operation at least six weeks prior to the commencement of lambing, a wider area or zone will be cleared of predators, even if the neighboring property is not controlling their predators.

During lambing: Predators such as foxes and wild dogs can travel large distances in search of new territory. Continuing predator control throughout lambing is aimed at controlling any new predator arrivals into the lambing area on your farm.

Post lambing: Monitoring of control sites once lambing is complete is important to ensure no baits are left in the field. Focusing predator management strategies on key times of year such as during predator mating season can help control predator numbers during lambing season.

Record keeping and data analysis

Records required to measure changes in lamb survival rates due to improved practices include:

- mob description and lambing paddock details
- scanning data
- lamb marking data
- any ewe or lamb mortality data
- any relevant site observations during lambing
- all data should be recorded for each different lambing area/paddock.

It is important to note that some data may seem irrelevant at the time, however it can help form an overall picture at a later time when assessing the data and looking for opportunities to improve results.

Working with local authorities

Working with the local authorities such as the local Wild Dog Controller can improve your results. Often the local authorities can provide helpful information that aids in the effectiveness of your predator control program. They will often have in-depth knowledge of predator behavior.

Local authorities can also hold information sessions to help notify and explain to the community why predator control is necessary.

It is important to know who your local authority is, how to contact them, and to notify them of any predator behavior such as wild dog attacks.

Training and educating staff

Staff are a key asset on any farm. If they are adequately trained, they will have the proper knowledge to carry out tasks and understand both why they are needed and when they should be completed by.

The use of apps such as FeralScan can help reduce staff workload. Being trained in the use of new technology can save labour and ensure information is easily accessible during times of audit or reporting to business owners.

Access the FeralScan app here:

<https://www.feralscan.org.au/>

Reviewing predator management strategies

Managing your flock for increased production will generally lead to running greater quantities of more productive stock. It is therefore important to use multiple strategies that build efficiency and reduce waste in the overall system.

When combined with predator control programs, an integrated approach has been shown to improve lamb survival and the bottom line. Strategies as part of this approach include staff training in best ewe management techniques for feed requirements and animal health, as well as lambing paddock size and location.

Record keeping and data capture 'Predator Control Management Program' (PCMP)

The recording of data and relevant information has been simplified by the compilation of a PCMP template. The PCMP is specific to a property and can be quickly deployed every succeeding year by changing the relevant dates. The benefit of the PCMP is that all the relevant information including key dates, resources required and neighbor notification of program record as may be required by law in some states and territories, is conveniently included in a simple two-page document. This saves time when the program needs to be deployed or when new staff require information about the program. *The PCMP template is located on page 4 of this document.*

Lamb survival data capture:

By measuring and monitoring this data for several lambing seasons, management decisions can be made to improve lamb survival. These could include the best lambing paddocks for twin vs single scanned ewes.

As a part of the PCMP template attached, a data capture worksheet has been developed. The worksheet contains the relevant fields to help keep track of important lamb survival records for each mob on the property. This page can be copied or transferred into a spreadsheet. *See page 6 of this document.*

Additional Resources:

The following supporting resources have been developed by the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions and can be found at pestsmart.org.au/resources/

- [A field guide to poison baiting: wild dogs and foxes](#)
- [Glovebox guide for managing wild dogs](#)
- [Glovebox guide for managing foxes](#)

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Predator Control Management Program __/__/__

Property name: _____

FeralScan login details: _____

Password: _____

Property key contacts

| NAME | MOBILE | EMAIL |
|------|--------|-------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Property key dates

| | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Rams in: | Rams out: |
| Lambing start: | Lambing finish: |

Program start date: _____ Program finish date: _____

Signs up date: _____ Neighbour notifications date: _____

| Name | Contact method | Y/N | Name | Contact method | Y/N |
|------|----------------|-----|------|----------------|-----|
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Baits and devices:

Number of signs: _____

Number of bait sites: _____

Number of device sites: _____

| Bait/device | No. | Cost | Order | | |
|--------------------|-----|------|-------|--|--|
| 1080 Bait Fox Dog | | | | | |
| PAPP Bait | | | | | |
| Canid Pest Ejector | | | | | |
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Property map

[Insert property map from FeralScan website here]

