Beefy and the BEAST

Issue 9 October 2001 Department of Natural Resources and Mines QNRM01199

A co-operative project between producers and Department of Natural Resources and Mines evaluating the impact of dingoes on the Beef Industry

Introduction

Our last newsletter (Issue 8) on mechanical ejectors and attractant research drew tremendous interest and response—our biggest ever. Thank you.

Since then we have conducted additional attractant trials using grubstakes at Boondall wetlands, Laidley, and Jondaryan, and have carried out ejector trials at Maryborough, Currumbin, Tambo, Springsure, Jericho, Mungalalla, Roma and Dunkeld. In many ways the ejector trials were disappointing.

Inside this issue

Mechanical ejectors and attractant research

At the completion of attractant testing earlier this year, it was evident that the United States commercial products (Canine Call, Magna Glan, Final Touch and Trail's End) were more effective at attracting wild dogs and foxes to grubstakes. However, salami (Hans mettwurst) and fermented meat (kangaroo and rabbit) were more often pulled from grubstakes and ejectors.

Trials this year have shown that many wild dogs and foxes won't attempt to pull ejector tops when they encounter them. It is possible that many will on subsequent encounters, once they have overcome their initial wariness. We believe this wariness is related to how much natural prey is available.

Ejector in a dirt- hole set. In this case an attractant was placed on the cow chip and meat was fixed to the ejector by elastrator ring

Results of six attractant trials using grubstakes, and three where ejectors were subsequently used

Attractant	Canine Call	Magna Glan	Final Touch	Trail's End	Fermented meat	Cooked beef liver	Salami	Tuna Oil
Total Interactions	148	159	132	139	117	81	113*	94
Mean grubsake pull rate (%)	27	32	27	30	38	19	44	30
Ejector kills	3	5	10	3	13	8	12#	7
Corpse not found		2			1		1	1

* Not tested in one trial # Tested in only two of three trials

Presentation methods

During 2001, we compared the differences in pull rate by wild dogs and foxes and differences in pull rate and interference by non-target species when ejectors were placed in the open, hidden in grass and leaves, put in a 10 cm hole, or completely buried underground or in a mound.

Results showed that wild dogs refused to eat fresh kangaroo and emu meat, and even salami and fermented meat (our most palatable attractants). With the more attractive lures (Canine Call or Magna Glan) on cow chips or sticks nearby, increased numbers of wild dogs and foxes inspected the baits, but did not pull at the fresh meat or salami. There is no reason to believe that, had the fresh meat contained 1080, poison baits would have been treated any differently. Why is this so?

It is possible that native prey numbers might be the cause. When fresh game is easily caught and available, wild dogs are probably not interested in scavenging baits, particularly when they are dried out and covered with ants and dust. It has been noticed in previous years that the moisture content of baits affects palatability.

However, if the current dry conditions continue and prey numbers decline, it is probable that interest in baits and ejectors will increase. At the same time, with less prey available, wild dog attacks on domestic livestock are likely to increase.

On a positive note, even though fresh meat was used on ejectors, no birds or goannas were killed. To date, 54 wild dogs and 15 foxes have been taken on ejectors, but no non-target birds or animals.

Fox from Dunkeld beside a dirt-hole set

Results of trials in 2001 comparing the manner in which ejectors are set

	Surface	Concealed	In hole	Buried
Pulled by wild dog	2	0	0	0
Visited by dog	31	35	23	17
Pulled by fox	3	1	4	4
Visited by fox	4	2	1	0
Taken by birds	30	28	12	9
Taken by ants	13	22	16	9

Buried (mound) set attractant was placed on the rock

Preliminary findings

Certainly, fewer birds remove the bait on ejectors buried or placed at the bottom of a hole. However, unless highly attractive call lures are used nearby, it seems fewer buried ejectors are discovered or visited by wild dogs. Surprisingly, there seems to be no advantage to concealing baits in grass and leaves as birds and ants locate them without difficulty.

While fresh meat or meat-based attractants performed best on ejector tops, birds and ants caused a problem by removing the bait material and/or setting off ejectors. Using attractants painted on rubber tops almost eliminated the bird and ant problem, but fewer ejectors were pulled.

Over the next few months, we are considering wrapping ejector tops in fresh kangaroo or rabbit hide to help keep dust, ants and birds out of the bait. We also plan to increase the fat content of attractants during summer to slow down desiccation and improve moisture content and palatability.

Availability of attractants

For enquiries about attractants for wild dog trapping contact Tony Serle at Warwick (ph: 07 4661 7066) or Alex Krstic of 'Wildpro' in Victoria (ph: 0418 824 248) who are two commercial suppliers of US, and locally made wild dog attractants. The latter has a website (www.wildpro.com.au).

Wild Dog Strategy

Queensland's first State-wide, comprehensive draft strategy for managing wild dogs was recently launched for public comment by the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines, Stephen Robertson.

The draft strategy recognises that wild dogs impact not only on the grazing industries, but also increasingly on urban and near-urban communities.

It also recognises that we need to preserve dingoes as a native species by reducing interbreeding with feral dogs, and keeping dingo interactions with people to a minimum.

Complete eradication of wild dogs is not seen as a realistic option, and a coordinated control approach designed to minimise wild dog impacts is proposed as the best solution.

The draft is available from the NR&M website: http://www.dnr.qld.gov.au/resourcenet/land/landprotection/wilddog/index.html.

For more information contact Clyde McGaw on (07) 3406 2869.

Ejector concealed in a clump of grass

Hear from you

For further information contact:

Lee Allen and Tony Gonzalez
Department of Natural Resources
and Mines, PO Box 318
Toowoomba Q 4350

Telephone (07) 4688 1397
Email Lee.Allen@dnr.qld.gov.au

Queensland Government
Natural Resources and Mines

BRS