



Federal Standing Committee, Inquiry into the Impact on Agriculture of Pest Animals

12th. April 2005.

from: Peter, Flora and Paul Axford, 'Sturt Meadows' Station, Leonora.

September 2000, we purchased the Sturt Meadows lease.

Reasons:

1. Viable size, good grazing, excellent stock water supplies, versatility in livestock
2. Environment away from the Wheat Belts of Australia – asthma.
3. PLB stock carrying capacity max. 25000 dse.
4. 400.000ha. with 70 water points (wells and bores)

We are at the front line of wild dog impact, and whilst Governments do inquiries, drawing up strategies and plans, our income is and has been eroded by dogs, and there seems no end in sight. When we purchased the property there was not a dog problem, and had not been for a number of years. The last four years have been depressing years, because while we see our stock mauled, mutilated and killed, the Govt. has procrastinated and achieved nothing; the area is now in crisis

Merino wool and meat enterprise

May 2001, Shearing: 6500 grown sheep, 4500 lambs.

October – November 2001, dog tracks noticed south of Lake Reaside on Sturt Meadows.

January 2002, spotted first dog – back and white markings.

February 2002, shot first dog at 'Gum Bore'

April 2002, three 'pet' lambs killed by the house yard by a feral dog.

May 2002, shored 6300 sheep, a large number - 50-60% - having dog bites.

July/August 2002, shored 2700 straggler sheep, also showing signs of dog attack.

December 2002, Change of annual shearing time to Nov/Dec.

Summer mustering by trapping at waters, to eliminate cost of aerial mustering.

December 2002, shored 5000 grown sheep.

Marked increase of dog attack

No lambs marked in 2002

Autumn 2003, good lambing - 80%

Late winter, noticeable drop in lamb numbers.

December 2003, shored 2700 sheep, dogs killing sheep in the holding yards at the woolshed, found 15 dead, and 51 mauled, with a number dying later.

128 lambs marked from 3000 ewes, mated after Dec. 2002 shearing

May 2004, remaining ewes all had lambs.

June 2004, appointment with Banker about financial situation.

- a. Bank would not advise lending more money on sheep.
- b. Bank would consider lending money on cattle.
- c. Banker says we must have a start of 500 cows to be viable.
- d. Three year loan arranged, to be paid out in 2008
- e. Late Sept. & Oct. purchased 480 cows.

December 2004, shored 950 sheep, no lambs, and possible 300 stragglers to be shorn.

21 full wool sheep found dead at the woolshed, obviously killed by more than one dog

Difficulty contracting shearers because of low numbers and distance, to do remaining numbers.

Goat Enterprise

May 2001, APB did a goat survey on pastoral lands.
There were approximately 4-4500 goats on Sturt Meadows.
We have only sold an average of 3-400 Billies annually.

February 2004, we purchased 13 Boer Billies to improve genetics.
March 2005, one Boer Billy left
Others killed by dogs or died as a result of injuries

March 2005, We have 600 – 700 goats left

Northern Goldfields region sheep industry in crisis.

Elders

150,000 sale sheep in 2000.
30,000 sale sheep in 2004 – not all sale surplus stock. (Sold to remove from dog attack)

Penns Cartage, Kalgoorlie

1992 – 9000 bales of wool
2004 – less than 1500 bales of wool

Landmark

1990's - average sale 3000 bales
2005 - sales, less than 100

Dog control / eradication on Sturt Meadows

1. APB aerial baiting programme – twice a year. Autumn and early summer-average of 2700 baits each time.
2. APB say 1in10 baits available to wild dogs by aerial baiting
3. Difficulty in getting enough baits for effective coverage of leases
4. 2000 – 2500 ground baits made with impregnated oats with 1080.
5. 12 traps set in known dog trails.
6. Each station member (3) carrying a rifle every day.

2001-2002 – 2003 – 2004 – pt. 2005

Station people involved in wild dog control/eradication - Peter Axford, Paul Axford and Dudley Angel (staff)
2 men per week - for 30 weeks annually,
1 man per week - 22 weeks
Plus 1000's of kilometres for three vehicles

And we still have losses.

The time given to dog control has not allowed us to do our normal station maintenance and with the lack of income there has been no improvements.

We did employ three staff, and only had one for the last two years, in March 2005, our staff member left our employment and we cannot afford to replace him.

2002 –2003, we lost 4 fully trained working sheep dogs (valued at \$2000 each) with baits. 1080 is still effective; anyone who says it does not work should give it to his or her own dog

Perenties (large lizards) – locally known as 'bungarras' and ants eat approx. 95% of 1080 baits from October to April, with some carried away by birds, and approx 2-5% actually reaching dogs.

January/February/March 2005 on track for another bad dog attack year.

1. Mauled and killed roos and goats at water points. Calves -bitten tails and ears.
2. No rain in the southern rangelands, and the dogs are going to keep coming.
3. Of all the dog plagues, these years would have to be the worst.
4. Dogs are not only dingoes; most dogs seen and or killed are x-breeds.
5. X-breeds have two whelpings a year that equates to 10 - 15 pups annually.
6. Female dogs breed as early as 9mths.old; this can mean 4-5 litters in 2 years.
7. The x-breed dog is a bigger, smarter and much more aggressive than the pure dingo.
8. The pure dingo is in threat of extinction due to poor legislation and inactivity on dog control in UCL and Aboriginal Lands.

Some Possible Solutions for the Federal Government:

1. All land users to be rated, e.g. Mining companies, Tenement holders, Tourists and urban dwellers etc. (For information, we pay a fire levy/rate and yet we are out of the local assistance area)
2. Aboriginal groups to be involved in the APB and pay a rate
3. Employ Doggers - -at least 20 in the UCL, for dog control
4. Clean up the over populated dogs in the Aboriginal communities
5. Govt. to keep control of the dogs in the Aboriginal Communities.
6. Build a fence from the Pilbara to the Nullabor.

Some Possible Solutions for support to Station owners affected by a circumstance beyond their control

1. Federal Govt. to give Interest Rate Subsidy for three years.
2. Household income Assistance up to five years.
3. Give the State Govt. the money to buy out the leases by mutual agreement with the leaseholder under threat of continuous dog plague.
4. Debt-write-off to lease holders affected by dogs.
5. Part wage and travel assistance, to stations owners to control /eradicate dogs

Federal Govt. to take control of Pest Animals from State Govts. in the National Interest because pest animals have no borders/ boundaries, and to stop doubling up and wasting money.

Change or write Legislation, that a landholder can have pest animals on his land, but if it impacts on his neighbours, the landholder is open to litigation

What if there is rabies/foot and mouth outbreak?

How would the Nation/ Government Authorities deal with it?

It would change the way Australians live and travel with in their own country, because at this point in time there is no way to control an outbreak of rabies with the number of feral dogs at large.

The Industry has collapse dramatically in this region, it is going to need long term financial assistance to recover, and recover it could, because it is proven to be good grazing land with good water.

We would have recovered from the drought if it had not been for the dog plague, because we were carrying stock numbers well below the carrying capacity of the country.

Even though we have been forced to change to cattle, the dogs still cause mutilation and severe losses to calves and yearlings.

It is a fallacy that we can get mine work in the Goldfields. The mining industry has changed and the capital investment we would have to out lay would be worth more than our lease, and there is no guarantee of continued work.

The State Govt. has left the Goldfields to sink or swim and it has sunk, because of no real help in solving a problem that was not of our making, but mismanagement of other lands.

It is a known fact that members of the Aboriginal communities bring their dogs out to pastoral leases 'for a feed' and if they do not come back when called, the people leave them on the station and maybe return in a day or week or never to find that dog.

Tell us - how are we to deal with this situation?

The Aboriginal people have a wanton disregard for the livestock industry, everyone has skirted around this issue and will not say anything for fear of repercussions, but we have our backs to the wall, financially and mentally, and do not see why we should remain silent.

Biodiversity will happen if feral dogs, feral cats and foxes are taken out of the environment.
Camels, horses and donkeys, like roos, can be made a resource for human consumption or pet foods.

Pastoral lands had a rate increase in 2004 of between 400% - 600%, and benefits of this rate rise have not gone to the pastoral leaseholders!!

We have read the submission from the WA Government, and now know where the problem lies.

The Govt. prefers to write reports, talk about strategies, traveling around the State, facilitating meetings, but not listening, then writing the report they were going to write before the meetings anyway We find the report appalling, it has shown us that Govts. have no understanding what is really happening and the sad part for people like us is they will not listen to us, and they have the power and money to bankrupt us.

The CEOs, Consultants, Advisors, and most staff members of the Departments able to help us have been too eager to please minority groups, and also look at the problem with an academic attitude. It is a practical problem that has been neglected because of political agendas.

Question : Does the Government want a Pastoral Livestock Industry in the Goldfields of Western Australia?

Yours sincerely,

Peter and Flora Axford,
W. Paul Axford.

Attach:

- 1 x photo of feral dog shot by Paul in January '05. (Hill Bore)
- 1 x photo of three feral dogs shot, one after the other, by Paul in December '04 (Ida Valley)
- 3 x photos of one of our Boer billies showing the devastating effect of a 'bite' on an animal, not killed immediately, but dying painfully and slowly in the time following the attack.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION HELD BY THE COMMITTEE

ATTACHMENT TO SUBMISSION NO. 86

**ATTACHMENTS, APPENDICES AND PHOTOGRAPHS PROVIDED WITH
SUBMISSIONS ARE HELD IN THE COMMITTEE OFFICE**