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ERNIE CONSTANCE

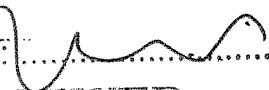
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ATT LYNDSEY

WILD ANIMAL IMPACT SUBMISSION

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ERNIE CONSTANCE

Secretary:  RECEIVED 6 MAY 2004 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY
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29<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2004.

covers approximately 2200 hectares on the escarpment of East Monaro.

It is a very productive property in a medium to higher (26" to 30") rainfall zone, at Peak View.

The Peak View area is a narrow belt of productive granite country running from north to south, between the coastal escarpment, of mostly National Parks and State Forests to the east, and very poor, unproductive mostly privately held bushlands to the west.

Burrungai adjoins an extension of Badja State Forest to the south and privately owned bushland, which in turn adjoins National Parks and Forestry to the east.

Due to our close proximity of bush, wild animals, have a huge and on-going impact on our grazing operations.

Country is also currently being prepared for pine plantations, less than 1 kilometre from my western boundary (and adjoining my son Brett's "Athlone" property), which I believe will exacerbate the wild and feral animal impact from the west.

I have personally seen evidence of pine

forests providing excellent harbour for wild and feral animals, in particular feral pigs, having agitated cattle on a block adjoining a pine plantation during a previous drought.

The wild animals impacting on Burrungai are as follows.

#### WILD DOGS

Since I began operating in 1972 a couple of minor wild-dog incursions occurred in the late 1980's and early 90's, following the cease of the aerial baiting programs to our east in the 1980's.

Major wild dog problems began in Feb 1999 with a very minimum of 500 sheep and more likely something over 600 sheep being killed, on my property alone, until the last of 7 wild dogs caught by Krupper Warren Schafeld was caught on October 6<sup>th</sup> 2003.

I recently did an exercise of valuing the replacement of sheep killed, lost wool production, loss of production due to change of stocking options, that is running wethers instead of ewes and lambs on the dog-unacceptable paddock cost of time spent, checking sheep, moving sheep, baiting for dogs, vehicle costs etc and came up with a figure in excess of \$200,000 over the 4 year period.

When the killing began the only assistance I received from the Cooma RLP Board was 1080 baits, which were spectacularly unsuccessful, as wild dogs do not pick up baits on or close to their killing grounds.

In October 2000 when wild-dogs were slaughtering un-marked lambs by the dozen,

I asked Cooma RLPB Ranger Winston Phillips if a trapper was available, as the baiting program was ineffective, and was told none was available but to contact State Forests, as they may have some-one. State Forests sent a National Parks employee, with absolutely no experience in trapping wild dogs. He was only available for about 10 days and had absolutely no success.

The killing continued unabated, not only on Burrungji but also on 2 adjoining properties "Big Badja" and Hugh Lawrence's "Woodhole".

In November 2001 I personally employed Warren Schafield to begin trapping for me, he was subsequently employed by the Cooma RLPB. Warren caught 9 dogs in the vicinity of Burrungji and Big Badja over the ensuing 2 years. I have had no further sheep killed or bitten since October 2003. However, I believe pro-active work must continue to keep the wild dogs at bay.

A very simple and very cost-effective control method is available, in the form of selective arial baiting in selected areas of the National Parks and State Forest lands to our east, however State Government has disallowed arial baitings to be carried out.

#### FOXES

A serious predator of newborn lambs, however, we carry out a very successful annual program using 1080 meat baits, before the commencement of lambing. Lambing percentages have increased by an average of between 15% and 20% per annum, since we began this program in the mid 1980's.

It is imperative for our on-going economic viability that our on-going 1080 baiting program is maintained.

#### WEDGE TAILED EAGLES

These beautiful birds are another big predator of lambs, and kill weaner lambs right up to nearly 12 months of age. They are also known to kill fully grown sheep. About 5 years ago we had a lush spring with many sheep suffering from foot abscess, any sheep which became seriously disabled were attacked and killed by the eagles.

#### FERAL PIGS

Due to our close proximity to vast areas of bushland, feral pigs are an on-going extremely time-consuming, almost continuous problem for us. They do tremendous damage to pastures and the environment, and wreak havoc on fences. God help us if we ever have an outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease and it gets into these nomadic ferals.

#### WOMBATS

These animals are an environmental disaster. Their holes in the creek-banks causing some pretty big erosion problems in our area.

It is also impossible to maintain rabbit-proof fences where there is a wombat population as soon as one hole in a fence is blocked, they tear open another one (or two).

Since pasture improvement began in our area, the improved nutrition available to the wombats has seen an explosion in their

numbers. They are now being seen in areas where they have never been seen before.

### RABBITS

One of the scourges of the Australian Environment. Once again an extremely time-consuming and on-going and costly commitment is needed to keep them under control. Large granite-rock outcrops on our country make total eradication impossible, as does having a couple of absentee land-holder neighbours who neglect their rabbits, year in year out, with boundary fences which can not be rabbit proofed due to wombat infestation and rough terrain.

Rabbits, A large burden on our resources.

### WINGLESS GRASSHOPPERS

Possibly due to our sunny westerly aspect and granite soils, Peak View seems very susceptible to wingless grasshoppers. We have had major in 1982-83 and another in 1995-96. Both plagues co-incident with 2 or 3 years of drought.

In both cases they wiped out all <sup>offel\*\*,\*\*^</sup>ing green feed at immeasurable cost. We pay a noxious insect levy on our RLPB rates, but due to governmental regulation get no support with this problem, in return for the levy.

### CONCLUSION

The major impacts of pest animals on my grazing operation are LOSS OF PRODUCTION, and the TIME and MONEY spent in trying to control these pests. They are all on-going, they are all a big part of property management

and maintenance.  
 Additionally, most of the resources spent  
 managing them, both in terms of time and  
 money are resources which could and  
 should be spent on programs directed  
 at increasing productivity, rather than  
 simply maintaining it at its current  
 level.

Ernie Constance  
 F.F. (ERNE) CONSTANCE  
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