



## Frequently Asked Questions: Wild dogs & poison baiting

### Why is it important to control wild dogs?

Wild dogs can cause death and injury to livestock which can result in substantial financial loss and animal welfare impacts. In some places, wild dogs can have severe impacts on wildlife (see [FAQ: Wild dog impacts](#)). Control techniques are targeted to control specific problem individuals or reduce populations to prevent impacts. Control activities rarely results in eradication of wild dog populations so ongoing control is usually necessary.

### Why do we use 1080 poison in Australia and where does it come from?

1080 is used for wild dog control because it is the most environmentally sensitive and target specific toxin available for wild dog management. It is a naturally occurring odorless compound which occurs in approximately 30 species of native Australian plants. 1080 is biodegradable and although manufactured, it retains all of its natural characteristics including diluting to nothing in water, being consumed and broken down by bacteria and fungi into harmless compounds.

### Does 1080 kill everything and how do we prevent poisoning other animals?

No. The dosage used for wild dog control is very low and therefore target specific. There is insufficient 1080 in a wild dog bait to kill most Australian fauna, which have varied levels of resistance to 1080 because it occurs naturally in Australian plants. Further target specificity can be achieved by using meat based baits, placing baits carefully and strategically, burying or hiding baits, tying them to known locations, and regulating minimum size of the baits used. State and territory regulations also manage the use and availability of 1080 baits to lower the risks to non-target species.

### How does 1080 work in wild dogs?

1080 interferes with cellular energy production leading to a breakdown in the central nervous system. Disruption to the central nervous system leads to unconsciousness and is the reason that animals exhibit a range of visually disturbing signs of poisoning. Research has indicated that animals are unlikely to feel pain as a result of unconsciousness.



Image: Richard Ali

### Does 1080 still work because we rarely, if ever, find the carcass of wild dogs after a baiting program?

1080 is still an effective and efficient poison for killing wild dogs. Due to the action of 1080 and the period it takes to affect cellular energy production, there is a lag between ingestion and onset of poisoning. This means they can move a considerable distance from where they have taken the bait to where they die. Dogs can also exhibit symptoms including uncontrollable running and photosensitivity which means they could end up anywhere, making it hard to find a carcass.

### What happens to the poison in the dead animals and will it kill others if they eat the carcass?

The poison in dead animals is broken down rapidly as the body decomposes, leaving no residual poison in the environment. Poisoning of other animals is unlikely due to the very low dosage of 1080 used in wild dog baits. Most native scavengers that are likely to eat a dog carcass such as goannas and birds are less susceptible to 1080 due to their digestive system or adaptation to 1080 in the environment, and are not affected.

### Do we have ANY evidence that wild dogs eat and are killed by 1080 baits?

Research across Australia has demonstrated that wild dogs regularly take 1080 baits and are killed. Evidence from first hand observations, radio collaring of individual dogs, remote camera surveys of dogs and baits, and the retrieval and testing of carcasses has clearly demonstrated that wild dogs will consume and are killed by 1080 baits. Baiting can reduce wild dog populations between 55% and over 90%. (see [www.pestsmart.org.au/aerial-baiting-rates-for-strategic-control-of-wild-dogs/](http://www.pestsmart.org.au/aerial-baiting-rates-for-strategic-control-of-wild-dogs/)).

## **Wild Dogs are predators not scavengers so why would they eat a bait?**

Wild dogs are opportunistic predators that not only hunt a range of prey from mice to buffalo, but will also readily scavenge carcasses at any time throughout the year. Wild dogs will scavenge road kill, dead livestock, animals killed by natural causes, rubbish, and scraps left behind by fishermen and tourists. Scavenging behavior may be more prevalent at different stages of their biology (eg. when feeding young pups) and can be dependant on seasonal conditions (eg. in drought).

## **Which baits work best for wild dog control, meat baits or manufactured baits?**

Manufactured and fresh or dried meat baits can be equally effective at reducing wild dog numbers and their impacts. No one bait type or method is universally superior to another. However having a range of different types of baits gives greater flexibility when delivering a baiting program. For example, manufactured baits could be more effective in summer when fresh meat baits may be susceptible to flystrike. Bait uptake varies with location and season and different bait types should be tried to see which is more effective at that point in time.

## **How long are baits active in the paddock?**

This can be highly variable and can depend on seasonal conditions and the landscape where the baits will be applied. It will also depend on how the baits are put out as a buried bait will usually lose its toxicity before a surface laid bait. For example, buried baits laid in summer in hot, humid areas may only last up to 3 days because they rot and degrade rapidly. Surface laid baits can last many months in the environment under dry conditions, but most baits will have been eaten or lost their effectiveness before this time. Care must be taken in dry desert or cold environments because they can last much longer as they dry out or don't degrade. As a precaution, working dogs should be muzzled when taken into a paddock that has previously been baited.

## **How much rain does it take to render baits in-effective?**

It is too variable to put a limit on the time that baits remain toxic after rain. Several factors affect this including the amount of rain, the condition of the bait, time of year and the bait type. Although moist environmental conditions do reduce the longevity of toxic baits, rain is certainly no guarantee that baits are no longer toxic. As a precaution, working dogs should be muzzled when taken into a paddock that has previously been baited.

## **Do wild dogs become bait shy after eating sub lethal baits?**

There is no evidence that wild dogs become bait shy at all after eating 1080 baits. Given the time taken for 1080 to act, it is unlikely that a wild dog will associate with feeling sick or disorientated with a bait that it consumed hours earlier. In any population of wild dogs, there are individuals that will take baits and others that will not.

This is why wild dog control programs need to incorporate a range of techniques such as trapping, shooting, baiting and exclusion. Using a variety of bait types may improve the success of baiting programs.

## **Can wild dogs learn to avoid control?**

Negative experiences of any kind can lead to avoidance. In order to limit avoidance, best-practice principles should always be followed: traps should be set to maximize the chances of a clean catch and to avoid an animal escaping once caught, and a shot should only be fired when a quick and humane death is certain.

## **Can pet dogs be poisoned by baits intended for wild dogs?**

Yes. All dogs, domestic or otherwise are susceptible to the 1080 dose in a wild dog bait. State regulations and usage requirements are there to minimize the risk to domestic dogs. A range of notifications and permissions are needed prior to delivering a wild dog control program. The majority of accidental poisonings of domestic dogs occur because they are roaming and enter areas where baiting programs have taken place such as farm lands or forests. It is the responsibility of the owner of the pet dog to keep it safe.

## **Do birds carry baits away?**

Birds may take baits but they are unlikely to be affected by them due to their resistance and digestive systems. They will rarely eat the whole bait and usually drop it nearby. It would be unusual for a bird to carry a bait very far. Regulations dictate the minimum distance baits can be laid near a dwelling in order to minimize this risk. Rural property owners should avoid placing baits close to dwellings or farm infrastructure where working dogs are likely to be used. In some cases, birds (e.g. currawongs, crows, eagles, and kites) can have impacts on control programs by removing baits aimed at wild dogs rendering the program less effective. Interference from birds can usually be avoided by burying baits, tying baits, hiding them in places where birds are less likely to see them, or putting baits out at dusk or after dark when they are less likely to find them.

## **Can baits be used safely to avoid baiting working or pet dogs?**

Current best practice baiting techniques should be adopted to minimize the risks to working and pet dogs. Practices such as burying or tying baits to known locations will assist landholders to know where baits are so they can avoid taking working dogs into these locations. As a precaution, working dogs should be muzzled when taken into a paddock that has previously been baited. A range of muzzles are available online and in stores- they are cheap and effective and are the only way to ensure dogs will not take bait.

Invasive Animals Ltd has taken care to validate the accuracy of the information at the date of publication [March 2015]. This information has been prepared with care but it is provided "as is", without warranty of any kind, to the extent permitted by law.