

## New research shows dingoes do not suppress feral cat and fox populations

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A newly released scientific paper has found the argument to leave dingoes unrestricted in the environment due to their control of invasive pests such as feral cats and foxes is flawed.

The paper, [\*'Stuck in the mud: Persistent failure of 'the science' to provide reliable information on the ecological roles of Australian dingoes'\*](#), was published in the September 2023 edition of *Biological Conservation* and provides a critical review of the past 30 years of research into the relationship between dingoes and other mesopredators, such as feral cats and foxes.

The paper has found the majority of research did not have the scientific rigour to support conclusions that dingoes suppress feral cat and fox populations, with only eight studies over the past 30 years capable of assessing whether or not dingoes suppressed foxes and cats - and each of those showing they did not.

Dr Ben Allen, Senior Research Fellow (Wildlife Management) at the University of Southern Queensland and one of the research paper's authors, said the last decade has seen an increase in some groups seeking to have legislation or policy changed on the basis that dingoes suppress feral cats and foxes. Each of these changes have been rejected and the most reliable research supports such rejections.

"There is no doubt that dingoes play important ecological roles, but our research shows that suppressing foxes and cats isn't one of them," said Dr Allen.

"These findings will help decision-makers continue to determine best practice wild dog management to ensure negative impacts on Australia's agricultural, biodiversity and social assets are minimised."

Greg Mifsud, National Wild Dog Management Coordinator, said the paper puts an end to persistent claims that the control of wild dogs/dingoes should be stopped due to their top-down regulation of feral cats and foxes.

"This paper reinforces what we have been seeing and saying for years now - wild dog and dingo management does not lead to an increase in fox and feral cat populations," said Mr Mifsud.

"In fact, long term field studies undertaken by the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions and partner organisations demonstrate that strategic and targeted wild dog/dingo management programs have the potential to reduce fox numbers by up to 100% and feral cats by as much as 50%. If dingoes do not suppress feral cat and fox populations as this review paper demonstrates, then these control programs deliver a far greater conservation outcome for our native fauna."

"This means that government policy to allow the targeted control of wild dogs/dingoes for the protection of livestock, domestic pets and human health is not leading to increased predation by feral cats and foxes."

This research provides landholders and organisations the ability to strike a balance in terms of dingo control measures to mitigate environmental and livestock production costs, whilst acknowledging the important ecological role dingoes play as apex predators, and their cultural significance.

For more information on Australia's approach to wild dog control, visit the National Wild Dog Action Plan website [here](#).

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# MEDIA RELEASE

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## KEY FACTS



## RESOURCES

2023 Biological Conservation paper: [Stuck in the mud: Persistent failure of 'the science' to provide reliable information on the ecological roles of Australian dingoes - ScienceDirect](#)

2013 Biological Conservation paper: [As clear as mud: A critical review of evidence for the ecological roles of Australian dingoes](#)

[National Wild Dog Action Plan](#): The National Wild Dog Action Plan is Australia's blueprint strategy for wild dog management. It promotes evidence-based, best practice tools and methods aimed at protecting agriculture, the environment and community wellbeing.

[Best-practice management of wild dogs in peri-urban environments](#): This Glovebox Guide assists landholders and land managers to manage the impacts of wild dogs on Australia's urban fringe. The guide has been written specifically for people living in areas with a mixture of rural, residential and commercial land uses.

[PestSmart wild dogs toolkit page](#): Outlines key facts as well as useful resources to manage wild dogs.