



Balban Predator control program

October 2012



Thank you for the opportunity; it was a pleasure to be involved in such a challenging exercise. A quick thanks to all DEC staff, Warren Catchment Council and the Local Farming Community for all the support given. It really was a terrific environment to work in.

Issues that could have influenced the results:

- More time to plan the logistics
- The first two weeks were heavily weather affected.
- The vixens were denned up with cubs.
- Movement of DEC staff through the core area (collecting sand pad data for the duration of the trapping program).
 - When foxes are marking trap sites with faeces, as they were marking sand pads, it is generally a sign that the animal is suspicious of the site and can be difficult to trap.
- No control of track access/ option of shutting tracks to vehicle traffic as needed.
- Unnecessary access, student groups etc. compromising trap locations.

Techniques and strategies that could be modified to improve the integrity of the program if it is repeated:

- Flexibility of trapping period, to minimise the impact of extended rain events.
- Shut down sand pad data collection throughout the trapping period to lessen the human impact on fox behaviour.
- Allow contractors to control track access as needed
- Maintain stricter protocols with the baiting program.
 - Ensure any uneaten baits are removed from the site to reduce the risk of foxes receiving sub lethal bait.
 - All foxes were extremely cautious and wouldn't come to food lure and were hard to trap.
- Remove the need to put traps in areas with refuge.
 - Refuge creates an opportunity to entangle the trap, chain, swivels and fox in vegetation.
 - This can cause injury to the animal. See image 1.
 - It would be more prudent to ensure traps are checked within a reasonable time frame to manage the animals exposure to extreme weather.



Image 1

- Change lure medium (maybe use liquid or tethered baits)
 - Maintain a viable trap site and combat non-target animals removing lures and baits.
 - At one point during the trapping 70% of lures were being taken by non-target animals each night. See image 2.



Image 2

- Access data on cat and fox movement either by DEC's cameras or contractor to install own camera monitoring sites before the trapping commences.
- Use of night vision to target hard to trap animals.
- No rubber jawed traps to be used.
 - Highly modified offset laminate traps suited to the off-target conditions are the preferred choice. See image 3 for example offset and laminated trap.



image 3

- See image 4 for example of trap jaws closed with hair of non-target animal



Image 4.

- Images 5 showing off target capture having pulled out of trap without creating a catch circle.
 - This indicates the animal was not held in the trap for any length of time.
 - It is very likely that another style of trap would have resulted in the native animal being captured, injured and destroyed.



Image 5

- Extend the program over five weeks with a week off in the middle.
- Take advantage of new technologies, M-44 ejectors.
 - For example - limit the trapping effort to 6000 ha and deploy M-44 ejectors with cyanide throughout the remainder of the 30,000 ha.
- DEC not to use inexperienced trappers unfamiliar with trapping amongst the specific off target animals.
 - Poor trap selection, trap location, set design, trap set up etc. can result in large numbers of off-target animals being captured and injured.
 - This not only compromises the native animals throughout the program but may jeopardise future control programs or scientific effort.
 - See image 5 for possum released after capture in foothold trap.
 - The release was due to a well set up trap capturing the animal in a manner that the possum could be released unharmed.



image 6

Effort and Results

Spotlighting

39 hours spotlight surveying for foxes

5 fox sightings

2 on Hazled's Property

3 on Lloyd's

2 individual animals?

2 shots taken, 1 on Hazled's property 1 on Lloyds

1 fox shot, 4th October, Lloyds



Foothold Trapping

669 trap nights with foot hold traps.

Foothold traps were set from the 17th of September until the 16th of October in 33 locations.

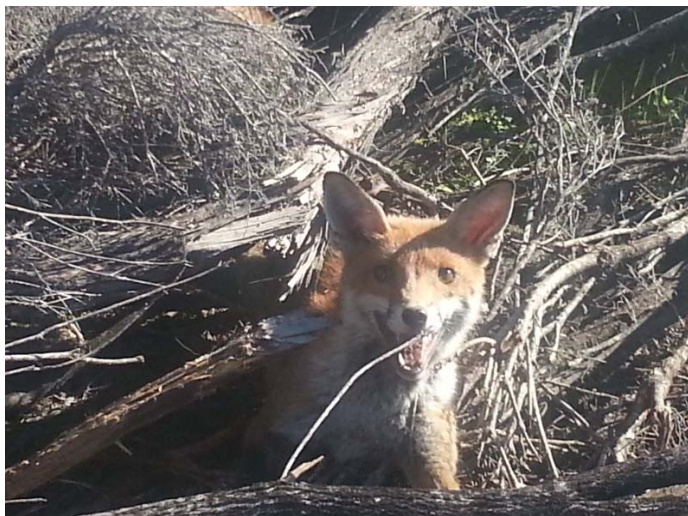
217 hours searching for fox and cat sign, setting traps, maintaining trap sites etc.



Four foxes captured and dispatched,

- One fox captured using food lure .
- One fox captured with curiosity/food lure.
- One fox trapped with passive/blind set.
- One fox caught with social scent.

1st October, trap 18



9th October, trap 17



11th October, trap 11



14th October, trap 23



Off target animals

2 tammar wallabies captured, dispatched

3 possums captured, released

1 echidna captured, released

Cage Traps

50 cage trap nights

2 chudich, released

1 Dickenson's property

1 Askew's property

3 possums, released

1 Dickenson's property

2 Simcock's property

Native sightings

1 numbat

3 woylies

1 brush tail phascogale

GPS locations of sightings

Numbat

-34 6.632 116 33.438

Woylie 1

34 6.035 116 30.263

Woylie 2

34 6.617 116 31.959

Woylie 3

34 11.8 116 35.375

1 brush tail phascogale

34 6.933 116 31.87