

ARE YOU DINING IN TONIGHT?

PATCHES of bushland are often blamed for harbouring foxes, and many people do not want to bait on their adjacent farmland because they do not see that the fox problem also concerns them.

Whilst it is true that foxes will often shelter in bushland during the day, they may not feed in that area, hence baiting in the bushland will not eliminate all foxes from an area.

Graham Blacklock, the Department of Agriculture (DoA) Biosecurity Officer at Kojonup likens it to staying in a motel; some of the guests will eat in the motel's dining room whilst others will go out to a food hall and eat from a different stall each night or from a number of stalls. And so it is with foxes. Feeding-wise they are territorial animals feeding from different food stalls within a specific area.

Hence if you only bait in the bush, you will only kill the foxes that sleep and eat there, and when foxes are eliminated from the area, others will quickly move in. For fox control to be effective groups of landholders need to be involved so that a dent is made in the whole fox population.

Graham says baiting in March eliminates many foxes as they are hungry when there is not much food around. He recommends baiting for a month or until baits are not being taken up. A co-ordinated fox shoot could then follow this to mop up any remaining foxes. In September a follow-up baiting could be carried out to kill vixens that are feeding their cubs.

Baits can be purchased from rural traders in most country towns on the production of a voucher issued by an Agriculture Biosecurity Officer. A simple one-page application form from the landowner accompanied by a map and a 10 minute training session on the safe use of baits, will generally result in the necessary approval.

If a minimum of 20 neighbours get together and form a Declared Species Group then the APB in conjunction with the DoA are providing grants of up to \$5000 per Shire to be matched by the landholders on a \$ for \$ basis to help with fox control. Grants are available for a maximum of two years.

Western Shield has proven very successful in bringing small mammals back from the brink of extinction. Extending this fox control across the rural landscape will help ensure their survival in other areas.

If you live in the Kojonup area and want more info, Graham Blacklock can be contacted by phone: 9831 1997. Otherwise, contact your local DoA office.
