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Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre National Farmers' Federation

Tuesday 7 September 2010

New manual guides livestock's furry guardians

The Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre (IA CRC) has released a best practice guide for managing guardian dogs.

The *Best Practice Manual for the use of Guardian Dogs* is designed to equip land managers with the knowledge to be self-reliant in livestock and property protection against wild dogs, foxes and other predators.

The manual provides landholders with another option — beyond fencing, baiting, shooting and trapping — to assist them to protect livestock from predation.

The manual was launched at the National Farmers Federation congress by NFF President, David Crombie.

“Wild dogs can be devastating to livestock producers. So much so, that they’ve even forced some farmers out of the industry,” said Mr Crombie.

An IA CRC report issued last year conservatively estimated the costs of wild dogs to wool, lamb & beef producers at around \$50 million. A report issued by Queensland’s Agforce put the figure at almost \$70 million dollars a year through predation, disease and control in that state alone.

“Clearly, the financial impacts are horrendous and these figures don’t even account for the social costs.

“Farmers forced to stay up at night to guard flocks or those faced with mutilated animals are clearly impacted by the devastating experiences of wild dog attacks,” Mr Crombie said.

The use of guardian dogs has proven to be a cost effective means of managing predation when applied properly. Preventing predation reduces costs associated with pest management expenditures in reaction to attacks and costs of losing livestock.

Some graziers and producers interested in using guardian dogs expressed concerns about the lack of information to effectively apply livestock guardian dogs to their production practices. The Best Practice Manual has been developed to fill this gap — strengthening the nation-wide effort to control the wild dog and fox problem.

The IA CRC encourages prospective users to assess their ability to provide proper training and management before making a commitment.

“In order to get the maximum benefit from guardian dog protection, proper training and management are crucial for the dog’s effectiveness,” said Greg Mifsud, the IA CRC’s National Wild Dog Management Facilitator.

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“As with any animal, producers thinking about using guardian dogs need to devote time to ensure it receives the right care and training,” Mr Mifsud said.

Land managers can use the Best Practice Manual and other information to assess the suitability for using guardian dogs. Accurate training and management techniques will help land managers take proactive steps toward prevention of fox and wild dog impacts.

“Guardian dogs are another tool in the arsenal to help manage the impacts of wild dogs, foxes and other predators. Participation and continued support for community based management programs is still required at a regional and landscape level.

“The subsequent control of wild dogs in the regions where land managers are cooperating is providing producers with the confidence to maintain — and increase in some instances — current flocks, while many others are looking at re-entering the industry,” Mr Mifsud said.

Along with livestock protection, guardian dogs have also been used successfully for wildlife protection and conservation purposes.

The *Best Practice Manual for the use of Guardian Dogs* was funded through Bureau of Rural Sciences' Australian Pest Animal Management Program.

The manual is available for download from www.invasiveanimals.com or contact the IA CRC, (02 6201 2887) for a hardcopy manual.

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Resources: [Guardian Dog Manual](#), [FAQs](#)

Media resources (including footage): <https://invasiveanimals.sharefile.com>

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