

### **Researching the fate of baits**

Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia (DAFWA) research has given pastoralists confidence about the effectiveness of aerial baiting programs. DAFWA research officer Malcolm Kennedy said aerial baiting, across large and inaccessible areas where dogs are known to be active, was already recognised as a cost-effective and efficient control method.

“However, there has been a lack of knowledge about where baits are ending up – that is, the proportion of baits landing in locations that are inaccessible to wild dogs is unknown. Bait rates are sometimes increased to overcome this uncertainty, potentially increasing costs and risks to non-target animals.”

DAFWA’s research, funded by the National Australian Pest Animal Research Program, was undertaken in tandem with the Pilbara Regional Biosecurity Group aerial baiting, with assistance from local landholders and DAFWA regional staff.

Non-toxic baits with radio-transmitters embedded in them were dropped across four landforms in the Pilbara (riparian vegetation, open ground with tussock grass, breakaways and gorges), and then located using radio-telemetry. The availability of each bait to wild dogs was then visually assessed.

“The availability of each bait was identified as high, moderate or low – with open ground being high and embedded in Spinifex or other inaccessible areas being low,” Dr Kennedy said.

“Ninety two per cent of baits across all areas fell into the high availability category with a further 7.5% considered to be moderately available. “Landholders in the rangelands can be confident then that when baiting in areas of wild dog activity, the vast majority of baits deployed from aircraft will be available to wild dogs. This outcome corroborates the effectiveness of aerial baiting when used as a component of integrated wild dog control.”

Regards

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