

Draft 1

Case Study – Talwood Wild Dog Control Group

Interview with - Mr Bill Oliver
'Binnerwell'
Talwood Q 4496

Initial interview 27/5/2013. Follow up 12/6/2013.

Talwood is 450 km west of Brisbane, Between Goondiwindi and St George.

1. When and why was the group started? –

The Group was started in 1981. The last dingos in the district were shot out in 1936 [information from Bills father-in-law]. In 1981 sheep were found mauled, but locals thought it was a domestic dog attack rather than a wild dog attack.

[Bill's father-in-law was the first affected property but due to a previous total absence of wild dogs thought the idea of people concerned with pursuing wild dogs was ridiculous]

Bills father and neighbour engaged an experienced bushman from Talwood, who learnt to trap at Millmerran. This man caught a bitch, and it was noticed that she had had pups. And this was the start of dogs frequenting the area.

In retrospect, odd dog tracks had been observed from 1978/1979 but it was not realised that these were dingo tracks [rather wandering working dogs]. Bill remembers shooting a yellow dog on a dam in 1978, thinking it was a strayed domestic dog that wouldn't come to him when he whistled.

When people got together a local [Bill Turner] who was associated with Talwood Agforce had the knowledge to guide the group in establishing a community committee to set out to control wild dogs.

[**Note** - Bill has taken a position on the recently formed Goondiwindi Regional Council Wild Dog Advisory Group – a group formed to advise and work with Council to overcome impacts of wild dogs.]

2. How many properties are involved in the group?

In the next 2 years there was a good reaction with 65 land holders joining the control group, the area stretching from Bungunya to Weengallen and north to the Moonie Highway

Eventually, in 2009 a separate Weengallen group formed [Ross Hindle current chair] and the Talwood group still remains with thirty members.

The Talwood group is willing to have surrounding properties join if they wish to.

3. How has your group functioned?

When the group requires further funds the Secretary/ Treasurer sends out a letter - for the last 5 years this has asked for a contribution of \$200. In the last mail out 27 land holders out of 32 responded.

Australian Wool Innovation [AWI] has also contributed funds used for a meat freezer, traps and use of a trapper.

The local shire Goondiwindi Regional council have also assisted, with 1080 baiting services and access to an excellent trapper, Mr Robbie Cox.

Of the 30 or so properties in the group, 10 run commercial sheep flocks [some wool and some fat lamb] while other run small mobs of killers for rations. The majority of cattle producers still have sheep infrastructure, and some properties run goats, partially as a tool in woody weed control.

One sign of success is a local cattle property recently purchased has gone back to sheep production. The owner of this property, Bruce Webster is the current Chair.

East of the group there is generally more broad acre farming.

Bill is the Secretary / Treasurer since 1998. The land holders elect a chair of the group. Meetings are called generally when things need doing, and are now 2 – 3 times per year

When a baiting is due members are rung and remind. The GRC supplies bait meat once per year; land holders supply their own for the other yearly bait.

In the past there was an agreement with Waggambba Shire for cost sharing of dollar: dollar, e.g. when purchasing 10 traps for the group.

The [current] Goondiwindi Regional council give support through 1080 services and access to the talented council trapper, Mr Robbie Cox. It also pays a bounty.

If a dog is harassing stock, Bills checks it out, has a go at trapping or gets the GRC trapper Robbie Cox to set traps. Bill sees Robbie as a good resource – he has taught placement, tracking, and looking out for different things when trapping.

When a difficult dog is in the country the Group pay a trapper a kilometre rate – lately over 3 000km was done to get a difficult dog. Payment for a trapper can be a kilometre rate [\$1/km] plus an hourly rate. [Bill notes that he pays shearers travel \$0.72/km both ways]

4. What hurdles have you had to overcome?

Bill made a few points –

- Bigger areas create some difficulty - easier now Weengallon formed own group.
- Group has a response of 27 financial members out of 32 property owners approached. Success rate due to approach – letting people know of what is happening and how many dogs have been sorted.
- Dealing with people is very important – talk to one person in an area and encourage him to talk to his neighbours.

- Bill is not in favour of the big stick approach – believing it to put people off from the outset.
- Has found that fences electrified for goat control steadies the movements of wild dogs.

5. What have been the outcomes?

Just under 100 dogs caught and an unknown number have been baited. [Have found 3 dead after baiting]. Interestingly, of the trapped dogs all bar 3 have been male, the rest female.

Wild dogs have a minimal impact on livestock in the area

6. What might other landholders in the same circumstance learn from your group?

- Form a group and attack the problem.
- Accept that there will be doubters initially.
- Don't use a big stick.
- Keep in mind that it won't work overnight – persistence is required.
- The Talwood Group started with a sprinkling of properties baiting, but now have a 'blanket' of properties across the group participating.
- From a small beginning the group is now baiting 150 000 acres in one baiting 'block'

7. Anything else you wish to add?

Fringe areas can be problematic – just the size of the area and communication to all involved. There is a dog control void between Bungunya and Goondiwindi [east of the Talwood Group]. Ross Hindle is chair of Weengallon Group which is to the west.

Have got 5 dogs in the last 12 months. The area often gets 'clued up' dogs – dogs that have been exposed to baits/guns/traps in other areas, and result is harder to control dogs.

Bills personal trapping development –

- Firstly travelled with trapper Terry Jarick – as a 'gate opener' but observed and learned.
- Attended a trapping school run by Don Sallway - very good at picking up what people were doing wrong.
- Later going with GR trapper Robbie Cox – learnt a lot from Robbie. - still learning and still relying on Robbie

In last few years Bill has seen more ground birds i.e. quail and plain turkey. He also believes lizards and skinks are numerous, as are echidnas. He has found dead cats and foxes, and may have found a quoll track

Bill has signed 'Authority' to pick up baits for many other people in group if they can't make the baiting station. He also advises people to read advisory note that is given out when people take delivery of 1080 baits