

WILD DOGS, CONTROL

753. Hon BRUCE DONALDSON to the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:

I refer to the answer to question without notice 701 asked in this place in relation to wild dog control. I also understand that a couple of other questions have been asked about the same issue. However, I will still ask this question, which is in eight parts, and I am sure the answer will be a lot shorter than the question.

- (1) Has the minister made himself aware of the seriousness of this matter, in particular the proposal to fund five new doggers?
- (2) Is the minister also aware of the widespread nature of the problem east of Laverton, along the Nullarbor, east of Norseman, east of Kalgoorlie, east of Menzies, east of Wiluna and in Yilgarn?
- (3) Is it not a fact that the problem is so serious that it requires urgent government attention and intervention?
- (4) What is the current bounty on dog scalps, and who pays?
- (5) Is the minister aware that six-monthly aerial baiting, although covering large areas, is not completely effective, resulting in wild dog and dingo numbers increasing at an alarming rate?
- (6) Is the minister in possession of a survey and submission from the Shire of Laverton calling for urgent action?
- (7) Is the minister also aware of the serious cattle and sheep losses on the following properties: Laverton Downs - 1 800 head lost; Yakabindie Station - 1 000 head lost; Pinjin - 100 head lost; Banjawarn - dog problem; Granite Peak - dog problem; Arubiddy - worst dog numbers in 30 years, 800 head lost; Wonganoo-Bandya - possible 1 000 head lost; Weeko and Tarmoola - sheep losses; Yandil - visual evidence losses; Kybo - stud rams, injuries and deaths; Madora Plains - increase in dogs; Mt Weld - loss of 25 per cent of lambs and many ewes; Carnegie - calf losses; Yarnarna - wild dogs present; Prenti Downs - loss of cows and calves; Glenorn - dogs sighted, losses unknown; Delata Station - 150 sheep, 12 calves lost; Mill Rose - 27 adult sheep, lambs and calves; Cowarna Downs - four dogs destroyed; Edjudina - 50 to 100 sheep losses; Minala - sheep losses; and Erlistoun Station - high losses.
- (8) Given the graphic evidence and concerns of the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, the Western Australian Farmers Federation, the Agriculture Protection Board and the Western Australian Local Government Association, will the minister take immediate action to address this matter; and, if not, why not?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

The short answer is yes and we already are. However, I think the matter requires a more complete answer.

- (1) As I stated in the House last week, I am aware of the wild dog issue and the proposal for funding by the Esperance-Eastern Goldfields country zone of the Western Australian Local Government Association. That is the submission that I indicated was given to me by Councillor Ian Mickel in Esperance.
- (2) I am aware of pastoral industry concerns.
- (3) As Hon Bruce Donaldson is aware, the control of wild dogs is the responsibility of the landholder under the Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act. The Department of Agriculture continues to provide advice and training to landholders on best practice control techniques, as well as coordinating the aerial baiting program on the rangelands and on adjacent agricultural areas. Control programs in the rangelands are determined and funded by the Department of Land Administration and the pastoral industry through the zone control authorities using advice from the Department of Agriculture. It is not the role of government to intervene with funding for control on privately managed land.
- (4) The use and funding of scalp bonuses is determined by the ZCAs. Of the five rangeland ZCAs, only two pay bonuses - the Pilbara and Carnarvon. The bounty is \$20 per scalp and is funded primarily by industry through the declared plant and animal control fund.
- (5) I recognise that aerial baiting is not the only tool in the control of wild dogs. I gave some indication of that in answering a question from Hon George Cash yesterday. Certainly, it cannot be seen as a "silver bullet" solution to the wild dog issue. The effectiveness of any baiting is dependent on whether the wild dog picks up the bait, and that can be affected by the amount of alternative food sources and the placement of baits. It is essential that landholders undertake preventive and reactive ground control using baiting and trapping if effective wild dog control is to be achieved. To facilitate this, the

Department of Agriculture continues to train landholders in the safe handling of poisons so that they can undertake such control. Unfortunately, many landholders are not undertaking any ground control.

- (6) This survey and submission has been forwarded for the consideration of the wild dog evaluation panel, initiated by the Agriculture Protection Board.
- (7) I have noted such reports of wild dog damage.
- (8) As stated in the House last week, the Government has supported and continues to support landholders to control wild dogs on their properties. There are currently decision-making and funding processes in place through the ZCAs for industry to control wild dogs. I am confident that the findings of the wild dog evaluation panel will guide ZCAs, the APB, DOLA and other stakeholders in their decisions on the control program and its funding.