

## Wildlife Act Review Submission

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Independent Review of Victoria's Wildlife Act 1975. I would like to comment on:

*“ the need to protect and conserve wildlife and to prevent wildlife from becoming extinct”.*

My name is Ruth and although I am not a scientist, as a professional dog trainer I have been studying the genus, *Canis* for over 40 years. I am therefore backing up my comments with some well researched articles and links prepared by people more qualified than myself.

My main area of concern is dingoes; Australia's wonderful native apex predator.

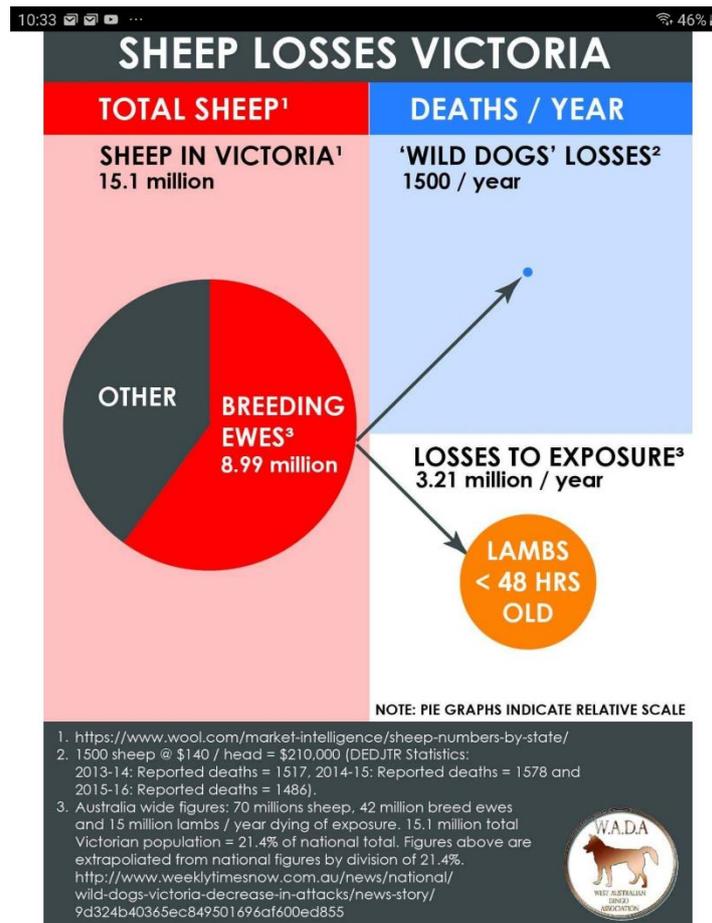


**Dingoes – our native Australian apex predator**

One of main issue with our relationship with dingoes is that pest control agencies and government agencies conveniently call dingoes “wild dogs” in order to give them the authority to kill and persecute them as a so called “pest” species. Killing them is mainly done by aerial poisoning with the inhumane, non-selective 1080 poison (sodium monofluoroacetate) although trapping and shooting are also used. There is a bounty of \$120 in Victoria for each dingo killed. This is not to protect other wildlife, but ironically to protect *introduced* farm animals such as sheep. It is all about what makes money rather than protecting wildlife and biodiversity.

Before Australia was colonised, dingoes acted as apex predators should; keeping the numbers of other animals under control by killing the sick and the weak and maintaining the ecosystem. They were also highly valued by Aboriginal people as companions, protectors and hunters, a relationship which still exists in many communities today.

Apart from being grossly inhumane, killing dingoes is illogical because, according to The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning's own figures the predation level is an average of 1500 sheep per year in Victoria out of a total of 15.1 million. (Less than 0.01% predation).



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Contrast the cost of compensating farmers with the loss of those 1500 sheep per year with the 13 million dollars per year spent on “wild dog” control. “Pest” control is big business and there are a lot of vested interests amongst the chemical control companies and some agencies whose very existence relies on government funding.

The distinction between “wild dogs” and dingoes is critical. Dr Kylie Cairns, a dingo geneticist has done studies which prove that nearly all so called “wild dogs” are actually dingoes and as such, they should be protected.

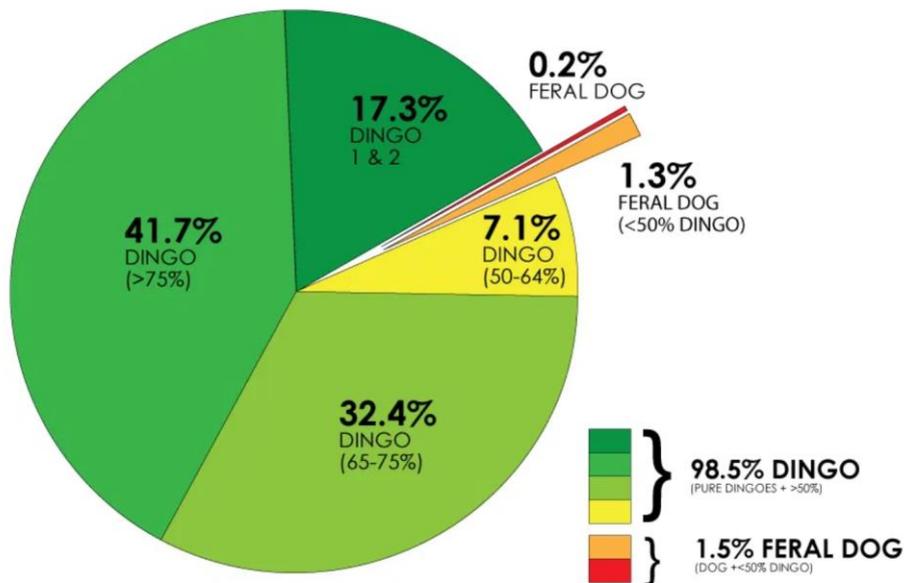
<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/03/210326104708.htm>

# Australian Rural & Regional News



## Appendix 1: Victorian Dingo Ancestry to 23 DNA Markers

### VICTORIAN DINGO ANCESTRY<sup>1</sup>



1. Raw data Stephens et al. (2015)

Score	Description	No.	%
1	Dingo 1 (dingo with no dog ancestry)	7	1.1
2	Dingo 2 (likely dingo with no dog ancestry)	101	16.2
3	Dingo with dog ancestry 1 (>75% dingo)	260	41.7
4	Dingo with dog ancestry 2 (65%-75% dingo)	202	32.4
5	Dingo with dog ancestry 3 (50-64% dingo)	44	7.1
6	Feral Dog with dingo ancestry (<50% dingo)	8	1.3
7	Feral Dog	1	0.2
		<b>623</b>	

It is a well- recognised fact that killing dingoes disrupts their family structure and is more likely to cause sheep predation as young dingoes are not taught appropriate hunting behaviour for their more favoured prey such as kangaroos.

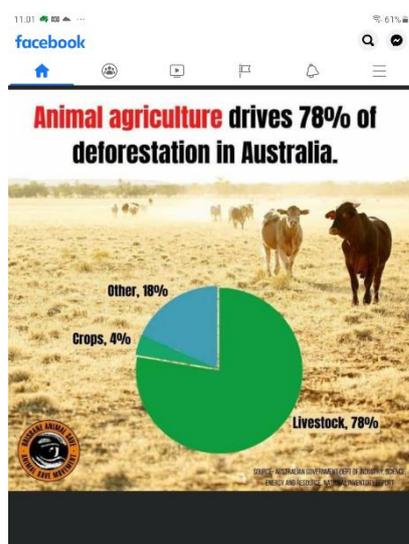
### Trophic cascades

Trophic cascades occur when an apex predator such as the dingo are reduced in numbers or completely removed leading to a profound effect on the whole ecosystem. We have a situation in Australia where we have deer, goats, foxes, rabbits and wild cats all causing a problem because of the lack of a predator! The dingo is that predator and could do a better job than using aerial 1080 poison and at no cost!

A good example of the benefits of reintroducing predators is the effect of reintroducing wolves to Yellowstone National Park. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysa5OBhXz-Q>

There has been a proposal put forward by Parks Victoria and the Aboriginal community to reintroduce dingoes into Gariwerd National Park (the Grampians). This would be a wonderful opportunity for research on how dingoes could fulfil their natural function and at the same time benefit farmers, the environment and restore natural balance. If we continue to kill and destroy dingoes, they are at risk of becoming extinct like the thylacine which in my mind, would be a tragedy of epic proportions.

<https://engage.vic.gov.au/gariwerd-management-plan%20>



Other comments:

### The effect of humans on wildlife

The growth of the human population is causing a tremendous problem for wildlife, but it need not be so. We are encroaching into their habitat to build cities, houses and other infrastructure. But the greatest cause of land clearing is for animal agriculture. Producing feed for animals and killing them for meat is an extremely inefficient way of feeding people and also contributes substantially to climate change. We will not survive as a species if we don't adapt to a more plant-based diet.

### The connection between Pandemics, Wildlife and antibiotic resistance

Overuse of antibiotics, high animal numbers and intensive farming techniques increase the likelihood of pathogens becoming a major health risk. Wet markets are thought to be the cause of our current Covid-19 pandemic. We are being exposed to wildlife viruses because we are moving into their "territory". It is accepted that unless we change our ways both our wildlife and human life are going to be at great risk. We can change – but will we?

Ruth Weston