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Co-operative control of the dingo

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CO-OPERATIVE

CONTROL OF THE DINGO

By J. HARDIE and R. LUKIS.

VERMIN control measures in the pastoral areas have often been rendered less effective by the existence of a number of Vermin Boards each operating independently of its neighbours. Bonus payments for scalps for instance, have often varied considerably, even between boards with adjoining territories, so that trafficking in scalps was encouraged. Bonus payments by some boards have been excessively high, with the result that shortage of funds has soon compelled a reduction of the bonus rate which in turn has brought about a steep build-up in the vermin population.

FOREWORD

To those who are interested in the pastoral activities of Western Australia, John Hardie and Rob Lukis need no introduction.

The co-operative wild dog drives inaugurated by these two, in company with a few other far-sighted neighbours, have been the greatest advance made in wild dog control for many years.

The drives have been extremely successful, and have formed on outstanding example of the practical application of the mass destruction technique so widely advocated now for vermin control.

Although these drives are now being backed by the Vermin Boards, originally they were quite voluntary, which is indeed a tribute to the originators and all those who now participate.

The Agriculture Protection Board has assisted with the drives, and it has been a pleasure to work with so co-operative a band.

When I suggested to the authors that the benefit of their experience would assist other dingo troubled districts, they willingly agreed to share their knowledge. This interesting article is the result.

A. R. TOMLINSON,
Chief Vermin Control Officer.

After many years of striving to achieve some form of co-ordination, some of the older members of the pastoral community evolved a system of co-operative dingo destruction which has given excellent results, and paved the way for further concerted efforts.

A system of zoning for 32 station properties covering an area of over 20,000 square miles was mapped out. Each zone consists of four to six stations according to geographical position and physical features. The members of each zone select a leader whose responsibilities are:

- (a) TO represent the zone in the supervision of doggers engaged in each drive.
- (b) TO pay the men employed—and later to collect funds from the other stations in the zone.
- (c) TO convene meetings of the zone members to discuss matters in connection with the field work.
- (d) TO furnish a report to the field officers of the Agriculture Protection Board at the conclusion of drive.

The co-operation of the Agriculture Protection Board has been an important factor in achieving success. As one pastoralist remarked "Their field officers know a lot about vermin of all kinds, and pastoralists in particular." The Chief Vermin Control Officer visited the area to gain first-hand knowledge of the problems involved and then backed up the efforts of his field officers so that the fullest

possible degree of co-operation was ensured.

The scheme was first proposed to the Agriculture Protection Board in mid-1954 and since then there have been three co-ordinated annual drives throughout the area timed to coincide with the period when the dingo bitches bring their pups down from the ranges to teach them to hunt. On leaving the whelping-grounds they come into large areas that are heavily baited as a result of one hundred per cent. co-operation by all the 32 stations in the area.

Each drive is of one month's duration and known "kills" of 194 dogs in 1955, 172 in 1956 and 104 in 1957 have been recorded.

Since this scheme has become an annual event the Protection Board in its willingness to help those who try to help themselves, has seen fit to organise a second drive annually during April-May carried out by their field officers and doggers at a time when the mating season of the dingo is in progress. A third drive will be undertaken this year to commence during August-September. A team of doggers under the control of the Protection Board's Regional Vermin Control Officer will hunt and destroy pups and parents in any known breeding areas. This will be known as a "dingo pup drive."



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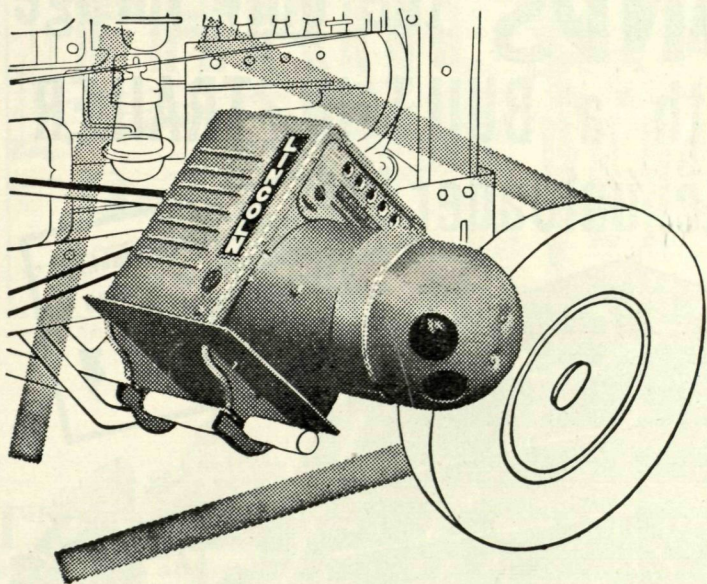
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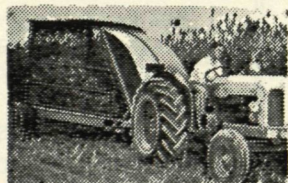
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