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## Wild dogs may eliminate Pastoral zone sheep production within 40 years

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Without a substantial and co-ordinated effort, wild dogs may eliminate the sheep industry from entire pastoral zone of Australia within 30-40 years.

The extent of the wild dog expansion across Australia is outlined in a new scientific review by Ben Allen and Peter West from the Invasive Animals CRC published in this month's *Australian Veterinary Journal*. The report concludes that without co-ordinated control, wild dogs will eliminate sheep across the vast pastoral areas of Australia. [Read the report here \(pdf 653Kb\)](#).

From various sources of data it is clear that wild dogs are increasingly becoming distributed across almost all rangeland sheep production areas in Australia. Although small numbers of wild dogs have probably been there all the time, records show that their distribution, number of sightings and damage to livestock enterprises are increasing. That change corresponds with the decline in sheep numbers.

"While wild dogs are not the sole cause for the contraction of the sheep industry, they are one of the major causes," Dr Allen said. "Consequently, without substantial effort put into integrated wild dog control programs, then, at the rate the industry is presently contracting, the rangeland sheep grazing industry will likely disappear within 30 to 40 years.

"Fortunately, the National Wild Dog Facilitator initiative by the Invasive Animals CRC, with funding support from Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) and Meat and Livestock Australia, and other wild dog officers with state agencies are steps forward in assisting land managers to develop and maintain cooperative programs to manage wild dogs across Australia," Dr Allen said.

Head of on-farm research and development at AWI, Dr Jane Littlejohn said wild dogs are the single biggest factor holding back wool production in Australia.

"The latest research has shown how large and widespread the wild dog problem is in Australia. The pastoral zone of Australia has been home to some of Australia's largest sheep flocks but is in serious danger from wild dog attacks. Almost every alpine region also faces a similar problem and this is why AWI has committed significant resources to help communities protect their flocks."

According to Peter Fleming from the Vertebrate Pest Research Unit of Biosecurity NSW, there are examples of successful cooperative wild dog management programs such as in eastern NSW and northern S.A. In the Queensland rangelands, the Paroo Shire's wild dog management plan is a model that is being applied across shire boundaries and into the Western Division of NSW.

Applications are still being sought for the next wild dog control project from Australian Wool Innovation (AWI).

Stage One achieved control methods across 1.3 million square kilometres of country in every mainland state of Australia through almost 50 wild dog control groups.

The survey results of 259 participants revealed how:

- 41% intend to reintroduce sheep.
- 71% noticed an increase in native animals.
- 68% intend to increase sheep numbers.
- 94% reported better wellbeing as a result of participating.

To apply, groups should download and complete the application form from [www.wool.com/pestanimals](http://www.wool.com/pestanimals) and submit with a project budget and map to [wilddogs@wool.com](mailto:wilddogs@wool.com)

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