

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Efficient Fox Control

Dr Ricky Spencer from the School of Natural Sciences is developing a cost effective technique to control Australia's feral fox population. This research is funded through Melbourne Water.

'Foxes are a pest in Australia, threatening livestock and wetland wildlife as well as the livelihood of farmers, agricultural and other across Australia' explains Dr Spencer. 'Unfortunately, fox control is not a coordinated effort because it is not cost effective or not target specific and involves noxious inhumane chemicals that kill many valuable working dogs each year. The study will test also the efficacy of a new toxin that has an antidote for working or pet dogs. New methodologies may allow continual landscape control and can "shield" an area from the reinvasion of foxes.'

The project is a major advance on current methods, which largely employ baits dosed with the toxin 1080. This study will use a new toxin – PAPP, and a lethal dose will be administered via mechanical ejectors developed by USDA for use on coyotes. This should reduce or eliminate the major barriers (killing native animals and working/pet dogs and humaneness) to broad scale fox control. The project is currently being conducted at Melbourne Water's Western Treatment Plant, where 100 ME/PAPP ejectors have been deployed and are monitored using infra-red camera technology. Ejectors are currently reloaded twice a week, but after six weeks and a decline in fox numbers, ejectors will only be reloaded once a month for up to 12 months. The aim is to assess cost-effectiveness and eliminate the 'boom and bust' cycle of fox management; whereby fox control is only conducted twice a year by many farmers and the density of foxes increases as soon as baiting ceases. Controls have been established and the study will also compare against previous trials of traditional "pulse" baiting campaigns.



The main benefit of this research is a cost-effective and efficient fox control device. By using two technologies together, the research aims to deliver a best-practice method for fox impact reduction.

Project Title: Developing Innovative Cost-Saving Fox Control Technologies at WTP

Funding has been set at: \$24,175

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May 2010