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**AUTUMN FOX CONTROL - TECHNICAL NOTE**

Farmers are keen to be involved in the Autumn programme for a number of reasons:

* young foxes are finding new territory – plenty of foxes seen in paddocks
* they are preparing to lamb and keen to reduce predation
* paddocks are bare (easy for shoots)
* nights aren’t too cold for shoots
* they aren’t flat out!

Fox and rabbit control is effective in Autumn because:

* not much feed around – increases chance of pests eating baits
* foxes are highly mobile
* young foxes are seeking new territory and aren’t streetwise

**AN INTEGRATED CONTROL PROGRAMME**

Due to the high mobility of foxes (travel up to 15km/night), an effective programme requires maximum participation and approaching control from as many angles as possible. The “Red Card for Rabbits & Foxes” programme has grown since 2004 to encourage landholders across the broader landscape to control foxes and rabbits at the same time to have maximum impact. A big focus of the programme is to link with existing programmes to further increase the reach of fox and rabbit control. Major coordination stakeholders include Landcare groups, DAFWA and DPaW – and the major aim is to define a baiting period in Autumn to focus fox control activity – taking into account key community events (eg. major field days, school holidays).

Each local area supports their local land managers (mainly farmers) to be involved in both shoots and 1080 baiting.

It is up to local organisers when they hold the fox shoot. Do consider the SSAA WA sponsored fox shoots from January – February, (see the website for dates) where $5 from each cat / fox shot will be donated by SSAA WA to The Regional Men’s Health Initiative (to a capped amount of $20,000)! A benefit in holding a fox shoot early then follow up with 1080 baiting is that young foxes are easier to shoot and the older, sly foxes will be over the hill before a spotlight ever finds them. They will however eat a bait when they are hungry!

**ORGANISING LOCAL FOXSHOOTS**

Fox shoots complement the baiting programme well, and often engage a different target audience and different fox population. They can be held as a promotional activity in the lead-up to the baiting, or as a mop-up exercise after baiting has taken place. Coordinating an event is a relatively straight-forward task, although a few key elements should be noted to ensure a safe, well-attended and smoothly-run event.

**1. Liability and animal welfare**

By structuring the event so that all responsibility rests with the participants, the shoot effectively

becomes a community activity that the organisation is coordinating, but doesn’t even need to be

formally associated with. Technically, the organisation is organising the body count and the farmers are organising the shooting – this removes any doubt as to where various roles and responsibilities lie.

Enforce self-responsibility - including that shooting only takes place on private land, with landowner’s consent (property liability covers any incidents). Also enforce that guns are left at home (or locked in vehicle) so as to remove any potential risks for accidents at tally up. By law all guns must be licensed, which means all gun-owners have safety accreditation. This is a standard expectation, although can be followed up if required. Overall encouragement and promotion of safe practices (driving, no drinking, gun safety etc) will cover general duty of care of the organisation, should any incidents take place and be followed up on.

**2. Time & location**

Friday or Saturday night is usually best - half moon or less is required for foxes to come into paddocks.

Advise the Program Coordinator (Jacquie) when the shoot will be – especially if on a SSAAWA sponsorship weekend.

Arrange to meet up for final tally …. and all important socialising! Either at midnight for BBQ and beers style or 8am for BBQ breaky style.

Choose central location with plenty of room for utes … think of body disposal as well. If midnight meet – a fire is good – may need permit from bushfire brigade.

**3. Sponsorship & prizes**

Remember that SSAA WA is the major sponsor of the overall programme – but don’t let this stop you from seeking local sponsorship for prizes etc! It’s relatively easy to get business sponsorship, especially those involved in the agricultural industry, as it’s a good publicity opportunity for them. It is important to publicise their sponsorship in order to give their business value for money (and keep them keen for future sponsorship opportunities!) Check to see what promotion they would like eg. logo on flyers etc and/or promotion on the night. Businesses may wish to provide food / refreshments or prizes (remember the emphasis is on participation and expensive prizes may encourage cheating!) When deciding prizes, remember some prizes are more group-friendly than others!!

An obvious sponsor is the company that is supplying the baits in your local area!

**4. Running A Competition**

* Teams of however many can fit on a ute. You may want teams to RSVP for catering purposes – leave RSVP date til as late as possible.
* Each team takes full responsibility during the shooting, which is done on their own properties and at their own risk. All guns are to be left at home before teams come in for the tally. This takes away liability of the organising group if anything goes wrong. Promote general safety.
* Decide whether you want tails only or whole animals– most people are interested in seeing the health/size of the animals …. and it has more impact.
* Decide a points system: typically cats 5 points, foxes 5 points, rabbits 1 point. Remember to tally up the fox and cat numbers for the SSAA WA sponsorship – and tell Jacquie your results by recording them on the website on appropriate form.
* Count each teams tally as they arrive and allocate prizes accordingly. Make sure you acknowledge sponsors during announcements!
* Don’t forget to promote the 1080 baiting programme to all your punters – and have some 1080 baiting forms on hand!

**5. Animal Welfare**

The culling of declared pest species (such as foxes, rabbits and cats) is not condoned by RSPCA. However, as long as the culling is done as quickly and humanely as possible, the RSPCA respects that this is an option for protecting overall biodiversity quality. The RSPCA stipulates that minimal stress is caused to the animal. Called the “shoot to kill” approach, it requires shooters to make only head shots from a stationary position using adequate calibre guns.

**1080 BAITING**

We encourage all farmers to lay baits on their own properties within the designated 8-week ‘hot period, which is 1st February 2018 – 30th April 2018. 1080 is classified as a S7 poison. It is fatally poisonous to non-native animals, including humans. Permits and training are required for its use – this is managed by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. Local Coordinators liaise with local farmers, DBAC, LG etc to coordinate their involvement.

* The “Red Card for Rabbits & Foxes” Coordinator provides regional support by linking with local groups. Support includes information and procedural updates, regional press releases and local press release templates.
* Local Coordinator to speak with their local Biosecurity Officer and confirm 1080 period and requirements for baiting (application procedure and forms, training needs, deadline for applications etc)
* Local Coordinators will approach and coordinate farmer applications. Previous baiters need to be contacted directly, as well as asking everyone you bump into! It is worthwhile targeting specific farmers as well – try to fill in “property holes” by getting farmers on board where surrounding neighbours are baiting … also target farmers with major creek-lines as they are fox highways.
* Update local database (recording template available) – this info will make your job easier at the evaluation end of the period! You may want to keep a copy of farmer map to use in following years if still relevant – streamline paperwork!! Then send completed applications to the Biosecurity Officer
* Confirm with Biosecurity Officers the procedure for the “safe use of 1080 poison” training and advise farmers (options include farmer take home test, workshop etc).
* Local merchandise agents (eg. Elders & Landmark) are registered to handle S7 poisons – contact distributors to order required amount (estimate 1 month before and finalise 1 week before - bait availability can be tight if you don’t get in early).
* While farmers are strongly encouraged to bait within the allocated period, a good fox is a dead fox!

Same for rabbits! Ring all participating farmers within a fortnight of the end of the baiting period to

A) Get their uptake numbers

 B) Encourage them to get onto it – if they haven’t laid them yet!!

You will need to follow up again within another fortnight to process the stragglers.

* Additional baits can be applied for at any time!

**KEY INFORMATION POINTS**

* Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development training to accredit landholders for safe use of 1080 is compulsory (20 multi-choice questions and a quick chat about main points). The info booklet is available online or from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/sites/gateway/files/Landholder%20information%20for%20the%20safe%20use%20and%20management%20of%201080%20PDF.pdf>
* ~50mm rain will deactivate 1080 in dried roo baits
* Use pongy tin of sardines, shiny aluminium can, feralmone (can of pong available from ag supplier etc) to attract foxes. Do not trail a dead sheep continuously as foxes may eat more than one bait before they die (it takes min 4 hours).
* It’s essential to secure baits (tie to fence, bury slightly, lodge among rocks/braches) to avoid a bird carrying the bait to a different site.

**ABOVE AND BEYOND…**

The regional coordinator’s role is to do the behind the scenes work to support and grow the local coordinator network and link in with other agencies/projects. Being a community engagement project, the Red Card for Rabbits & Foxes programme is flexible and willing to expand this basic approach in order to increase participation rates. Depending on local need/interest, activities that a local coordinator may pursue include complementary rabbit/pig/wild dog baiting, complementary spring fox baiting, targeting landholders surrounding high local biodiversity sites etc. The Regional Coordinator is at your disposal – get in touch and get them to help you!!

RCRF info available from [www.redcard.org.au](http://www.redcard.org.au) includes:

* Program Overview
* Local Coordinator timeframe
* Fox control tech note
* How to run a fox shoot
* Various media releases
* 1080 baiting application form
* Generic baiting and shooting posters
* Template – mail-drop flyer
* Template – community foxshoot data
* Template – local baiting data
* Baiting data 2003-2008
* DPIRD resources

For further information on any of this, please contact:

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