

2021 fox control program in the Kenny and Colquhoun Forests

2021 Advice for Hunters who use scent-trailing hounds and other Stakeholders

Background

The Southern Ark project is a wildlife management project undertaken in the State Forests and National Parks across East Gippsland Forest Management Area. The on-ground focus of Southern Ark is the ongoing control of foxes using buried 1080 and PAPP baits, for the benefit of native wildlife. Foxes are a major threat to a wide range of native species. Southern Ark has been in operation since 2005, operating across 3,600 bait stations distributed across one million hectares of State Forest and National Parks, mostly to the east of the Snowy River.

Increasing the area to be baited – including Kenny and Colquhoun Forests

The **Bushfire Biodiversity Response and Recovery (BBRR) program** is a State Government-funded response to the fires that burnt across Victoria in late 2019 and early 2020. The BBRR program has requested that the Southern Ark team increase the area that it currently baits foxes to include the Colquhoun and Kenny forests (see accompanying map), in order to reduce the predation risk for native mammals, birds and reptiles as their populations start to recover post-fire.

Working in co-operation with hunters who use scent-trailing hounds

Acknowledging that there are several stakeholders that use these forests, and in particular hunters who use scent-trailing hounds to hunt Sambar Deer, the Southern Ark team is adopting a modified approach to the usual fox control approach of having toxic baits buried within bait stations throughout the year.

To minimise the impact of the fox control program on hunters who use scent-trailing dogs during the open season, two short intense periods of fox control will be undertaken across ten-day periods during the following dates:

31st May 2021 to 9th June 2021 (all poison baits removed and **REPLACED** with unpoisoned baits on the 9th of June), and

30th August 2021 to 8th September 2021 (all poison baits removed and **REPLACED** with unpoisoned baits on the 8th of September).

A brief history of the program so far

Over 400 bait stations were established in 2020 and initially baited with unpoisoned (“free-feed”) baits across the Kenny and Colquhoun forests. A prolonged period of free feeding with unpoisoned baits took place in 2020, with all bait stations being rebaited on a weekly basis for nine weeks. This approach

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ensured that a regular pattern of visiting bait stations and bait consumption is developed amongst resident foxes.

After the nine weeks of free-feeding, poison baiting took place between the 5th and 14th of October 2020 (hound hunters were previously advised of this program). On the 14th of October 2020 all poison baits were removed and replaced with free-feed (unpoisoned) baits. Free-feed (unpoisoned) baits were maintained in the bait stations until the 1st of December 2020, which is outside of the season where hunters can use scent-trailing dogs to hunt deer. PAPP baits were then placed in the bait stations and the poison baiting program was sustained until the end of March 2021. Unpoisoned baits were placed in the bait stations on the 31st of March 2021 and have been checked and replaced on a 3 to 4-week interval since then. We have had a very strong impact on the resident fox population throughout the summer months in the Kenny and Colquhoun forests.

The two ten-day periods we wish to bait the Colquhoun and Kenny forest blocks during the hound - hunting season in 2021 will ensure that any dispersing foxes that have moved in will be targeted during the late May-early June session, and that any foxes who are attempting to breed will be targeted during the late August-early September baiting session.

Safeguarding Scent-trailing Hounds and Companion Dogs

The poison baiting programs are undertaken in a manner that puts maximum pressure on foxes while minimising the risks to domestic dogs. Bait stations have been established at one-kilometre intervals, and all baits are buried at least 15cm below the surface of the ground. This program is also using fox-strength (400mg) PAPP baits, which are unlikely (but not guaranteed) to kill dogs that weigh more than 15kg. PAPP baits also have an antidote however this must be administered by a vet within 30 minutes of the bait being eaten.

When the toxic baiting commences, A3-sized corflute Warning Signs will be positioned on all vehicle tracks running into the area of forest included in the baiting program to advise those visiting the forest that the baiting is taking place.

We are asking that you refrain from hunting with scent-trailing hounds and companion dogs in the Colquhoun and Kenny Forests between:

**Monday the 31st of May until Wednesday the 9th of June 2021, and
Monday the 30th of August until Wednesday the 8th of September 2021.**

We also ask that you do not interfere with either the free feed or the PAPP baits at any time during this project.

Further information

Enquiries concerning this fox control program can be directed via email to Andrew Murray, Southern Ark Operations Manager, on andrew.murray@delwp.vic.gov.au.