

## Managing kangaroo grazing pressure

Managing total grazing pressure is an important part of the strategy for Queensland's semi-arid grasslands; kangaroos are a particular issue because we have 14 million of the estimated 27 million kangaroos in Australia.

Kangaroo numbers in the mitchell grasslands increased greatly when water supplies were improved and the dingo population controlled, and they are now as abundant as sheep in some areas. Roos generally compete with sheep for forage, contributing significantly to the overall grazing pressure; while sheep and cattle can be controlled by fencing, kangaroos are free-ranging and graze wherever water and grass is available.

Kangaroos are often given as a major reason why graziers do not introduce systems of better grazing management. For example, grasses should not be grazed heavily after a fire, yet when you attempt to spell such an area, your efforts can be negated by the invasion of large numbers of kangaroos.

### ***How much feed do kangaroos eat?***

Three kangaroos eat as much as two sheep, generally from similar types of pasture. The kangaroo population has to be controlled where the numbers are excessive.

### ***How can I control the kangaroo problem?***

**Shooting.** Shooting can turn a problem into a profit. Professional shooters are in business to make money from meat and hides, but have to operate on a quota. They prefer the large males, whose demise has negligible effect on the population. Once the local population does drop, shooters move to more bountiful hunting grounds.

### **Shooting for effective control may mean employing shooters specifically for that task.**

Shooting is easiest and may have most impact on a local roo population when their numbers are low during a drought; but by then the pasture has been damaged while the hides and carcasses are in poor condition and worth little.

The best method is to concentrate harvesting going into dry times—the animals are in good condition, standing pasture is conserved, and a slow death by starvation is avoided.

Shooting can be effective in open mitchell grass areas, but is rarely so in timbered country where vehicle access and visibility are poor.



*Roos can be a major problem for good pasture management on the downs*



*Shooting is still the most effective way to control excessive numbers of roos*



*Turning a problem into a profit. However, culling to reduce the roo population is most effective at critical times*



*The 'Finlayson trough' uses an electric fence wire at a critical height and distance from the trough ...*

*... sheep step over the wire, roos touch it with their tails when drinking*



The **Finlayson trough** is not recommended by the DPI **Finlayson trough**. The Finlayson trough uses an electric fencing wire strung 7 cm high and 1 metre away from the water supply. Sheep will walk over the hot wire, whereas the roos' tails touch it. For a cooler drink, the roos move next door.

However after a time, the roos learn to avoid the wire by sitting sideways or in the trough, while sheep which get zapped when walking backwards from the trough develop psychosis!

The Finlayson fence may be best used to restrict water for a short time to concentrate the kangaroos at other watering points before shooting to reduce the population.

**Turn off the water.** Capped bores or troughs can be turned off to spell a paddock if there is no other source of water. This should be combined with a shooting program to alleviate suffering by the thirsty kangaroos.

**Fence off reticulated waters.** A roo-proof fence with swing or trap gates for cattle or sheep around your water point may persuade roos to drink elsewhere. Trapping roos is illegal.

There is no cheap (and legal) method of effective control. Some methods, such as restricting access to water supply, merely push the problem towards a neighbour unless a harvesting program is initiated at the same time.

**Controlling kangaroo numbers does not mean their annihilation.**

