

Meekatharra Rangelands Biosecurity Association Operational Plan 2024/2025



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INTRODUCTION

About the Meekatharra Rangelands Biosecurity Association

The MRBA has been established under the Biosecurity and Agricultural Management Act 2007 with a charter to assist pastoralist land managers to manage and control declared pests, both animal and plant. It is an incorporated not-for-profit association registered under the Associations Incorporation Act 2015.

The MRBA plays a key role in assisting land managers within the Shires of Cue, Meekatharra, Mount Magnet and Yalgoo, to control high risk animal and plant pests throughout the region. The MRBA region also includes a small number of pastoral properties in the northern sections of Mount Marshall and Perenjori Shires.

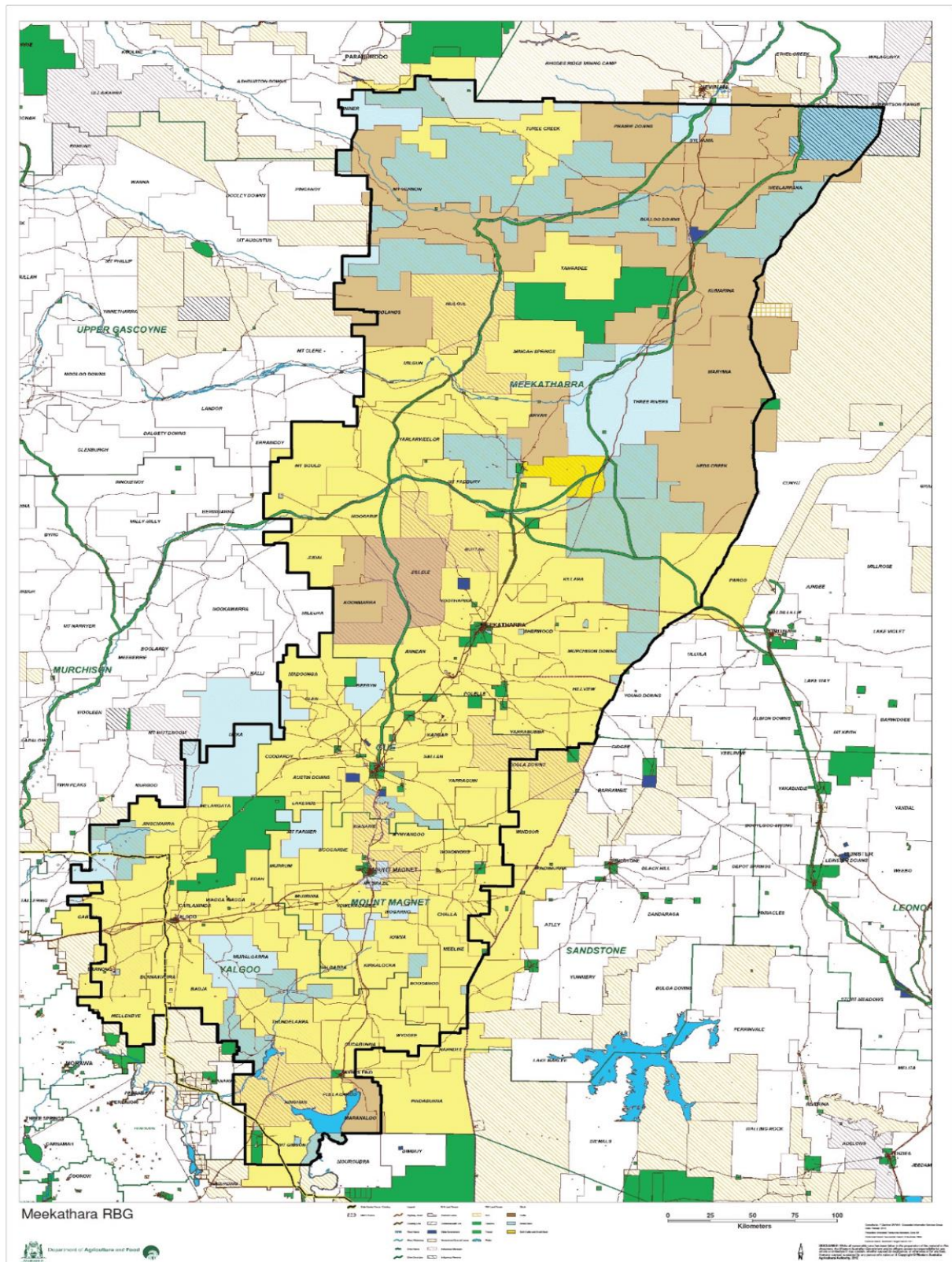
MRBA's area of operation covers 93 pastoral properties, which represent a range of tenure including pastoral leases, mining leases, unallocated crown land (UCL), state and national reserves, and indigenous managed pastoral leases covering more than 13 million hectares.

The MRBA shares boundaries with six other biosecurity groups. These are:

- Pilbara Regional Biosecurity Group to the north
- Carnarvon Rangelands Biosecurity Association to the west
- Northern Biosecurity Group to the south west
- Central Wheatbelt Biosecurity Association to the south
- Eastern Wheatbelt Biosecurity Group to the south east
- Goldfields Nullarbor Rangelands Biosecurity Association to the east

All pastoral leaseholders in the MRBA area pay Declared Pest Rates for the control of declared pests. The MRBA determines priorities in the area, and with the assistance of a part time Executive Officer, coordinates and implements control activities.

Figure 1: Map showing MRBA Area of Operation



Note: Land tenure changes may have occurred since this map was developed.

PURPOSE of the OPERATIONAL PLAN

The 2024/25 Operational Plan for the MRBA identifies the actions required over the next 12 months to control declared animal and plant pests in the region. It will assist the MRBA to meet its responsibilities under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007 (BAMA). The operational plan must be approved by the Director General of Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) before Declared Pest Account (DPA) funds can be released to the MRBA.

AIMS OF THE MRBA

MRBA declared pest operations focus on three key areas being wild dogs, large feral herbivores and weeds with the goal being:

- To encourage and assist landholders to fulfill their legal obligations to control wild dogs using best practise procedures with the aim being to reduce the level of predation to that which maintains biodiversity and ensures the viability of livestock production throughout the MRBA area.
- To work with government agencies in the control of large feral herbivores in the northern and central section of the MRBA area with the aim being to reduce total grazing pressure and enhance livestock production.
- To seek additional funding, by way of grants and other opportunities, to treat declared weed infestations on pastoral leases within the MRBA area with the aim being to protect biodiversity and the environment generally

MRBA MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the MRBA is on two levels – full membership and associate membership.

- Full membership of the Association is open only to declared pest ratepayers within the Area. Eligible ratepayers must apply for membership to the Association.
- Associate membership of the MRBA is available to any public authority and other corporate body that is responsible for the care, control and/or management of land within the Area, or that conducts significant activities on land in the Area. These bodies must apply to the MRBA to become members.
- A natural person must be appointed to represent any member that is a joint ownership, unincorporated partnership, business structure or public authority
- At an AGM, formal (written) proxy votes can be used to allow non-attending members to vote on issues.

MRBA GOVERNANCE

The operations of the MRBA are overseen by a Committee of Management. There are 10 Committee Members who are elected at the AGM on a rolling basis for a period of three years.

Committee members work in a voluntary capacity without remuneration. Committee members elect from amongst themselves a Chair, Vice Chair and a Secretary/Treasurer.

The MRBA has a part time Executive Office who is appointed by the Committee and who works on a contract basis.

Committee of Management members:

| NAME | POSITION | SHIRE | TERM BEGAN/ENDS |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Liam Johns | Chair | Meekatharra | 2021/2024 |
| Murray Pens | Vice Chair | Meekatharra | 2021/2024 |
| Mayne Jenour | Secretary/Treasurer | Yalgoo/Mt Magnet/ Meekatharra | 2023/2026 |
| Ashley Dowden | Committee | Mt Magnet | 2021/2024 |
| Greg Watters | Committee | Upper Gascoyne /Meekatharra | 2021/2024 |
| Jarrad Blair | Committee | Meekatharra | 2022/2025 |
| Rob Lefroy | Committee | Mt Magnet | 2022/2025 |
| Corey Folezzani | Committee | Mt Magnet | 2022/2025 |
| Jorgen Jensen | Committee | Mt Magnet | 2022/2025 |
| Angus Nichols | Committee | Yalgoo | 2023/2026 |
| Clyde Hall | Committee | Meekatharra | 2023/2026 |

The Committee of Management strives to:

- Provide an efficient and cost-effective service for the benefit of Members.
- Be responsive to the needs of Members, government agencies and rangelands communities.
- Provide avenues of participation and be accessible to Members, government agencies and Rangelands communities. To communicate regularly with Members.
- Act with integrity and in a financially responsible, sustainable manner in the interests of Members.
- Make decisions on behalf of Members in an open and accountable way.

Obligations of the Management committee:

- Provide direction and leadership
- Formulate policy and make decisions
- Manage the finances and meet compliance requirements
- Consult, communicate and network

- Research and review
- Act honestly
- Disclose interests
- Act with care and diligence
- Prevent insolvent trading
- Comply with laws
- Assist with fund raising

Management committee responsibilities:

- Operational and budget planning for annual work programs
- Perform operations or engage contractors to manage declared pests
- Promote best practice pest management to landholders in their area
- Provide community input into state and national policy on pest management
- Ensure accurate record keeping, financial recording and auditing
- Ensure MRBA holds current and relevant insurance policies
- Oversee tenders and procurement processes
- Oversee risk management

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The MRBA's key stakeholders include:

- MRBA members (pastoral leaseholders in the Shires of Cue, Meekatharra, Mount Magnet and Yalgoo, and with some within the Shires of Mount Marshall and Perenjori)
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD)
- Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA)
- Murchison Regional Vermin Council (MRVC)
- Shires of Cue, Meekatharra, Mount Magnet and Yalgoo
- MidWest Development Commission (MWDC)
- Southern Rangelands Pastoral Alliance (SRPA)
- Rangelands NRM (RNRM)
- Adjacent Recognised Biosecurity Groups (Pilbara, Carnarvon, Northern, Central Wheatbelt, Eastern Wheatbelt and Goldfields Nullarbor)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

With the completion of the MRVC fence in December 2021, the MRBA planned for the adoption of two engagement strategies, one for inside the fence (eradication) and one for

outside (control). Additional support continues to be required for the eradication target within the cell and is the focus of grant applications.

Strategies that the MRBA will deliver:

- Regular newsletters for landholders
- Regular updates of the website
- Ensure that all landholders have current poison permits and access to poison.
- Delivery of tailored training to landholders with a focus on those inside the cell
- Create face to face opportunities for landholders and doggers to share knowledge about control techniques
- Community forums

Specific Activities

| ACTIVITY | WHERE | WHEN |
|--|-------------|---------------------------------|
| Invite all landholders to attend the MRBA Annual General Meeting | Meekatharra | Oct 15 th 2024 (TBC) |
| Newsletter to all landholders | Email | Quarterly |
| Website update | | Ongoing |
| Landholder training | TBA | As required |
| Dogger / Landholder knowledge-sharing event | TBA | TBA |
| “Inside the Fence” landholder community days | TBA | 2024/5 subject to funding |

FUNDING SOURCES

MRBA’s main source of funding is from the Declared Pest Account (DPA), managed by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD). This account comprises Declared Pest Rates paid by pastoral lessees which are then matched dollar-for-dollar by the State Government.

MRBA also receives funding through the Royalties for Regions program for the control of wild dogs on, and adjacent to, DBCA managed land. The future of this funding is only certain until June 2025.

MRBA seeks additional funding from other sources whenever such opportunities arise, with a focus on declared pest control that is beyond what can be funded through the DPA.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Within the MRBA area there are substantial populations of several high profile declared pests including camels, wild dogs, feral donkeys, feral horses and feral cats, as well as several species of declared plants. These pose significant environmental and economic risks to pastoral holdings, unallocated Crown land and other environmental systems. Wild dogs are a key priority for landholders in the area and they currently account for approximately 85 per cent of the MRBA expenditure.

Control of declared animal and plant pests will be achieved through:

- A coordinated broad scale wild dog baiting, trapping and shooting program with multiple contractors.
 - The baiting program includes the deployment of approximately 280,000 baits annually and the employment and coordination of six Licensed Pest Management Technicians (“doggers”).
 - Individual members of the MRBA take responsibility for each component of the bait delivery, manufacture and contracting. This allows the issues of wild dog management to be dealt with first-hand by landholders experiencing the problem.
- Aerial shooting programs to control large feral herbivores (camels, donkeys, horses). However, it should be noted that the DPRFS does not provide for sufficient funds to support a large feral herbivore cull each year, and therefore MRBA can only reserve a portion of funds each year and then utilise these for a cull every third year. This is a most unsatisfactory situation, as the populations of camels, donkeys and wild horses are increasing at dramatic rates.
- Where possible, work with local governments within the area to provide incentives for declared weed and feral animal control
- Securing grant funding for additional pest control programs
- Provision of training for landholders in pest management techniques

The below tables outline in detail the activities, timelines and resources required for each planned program.

| MEEKATHARRA RANGELANDS BIOSECURITY ASSOCIATION | | | | |
|---|---|---|-----------------------------|---|
| DECLARED PEST ACCOUNT - OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022/2023 | | | | |
| Activity | Responsibility | Prerequisites | Date Required | Actions/Resources Needed |
| <u>WILD DOG MANAGEMENT PROGRAM</u> | | | | |
| <u>Ground and Aerial 1080 Baiting Program</u> | | | | |
| Implement ground and aerial baiting programs. | All Landholders within MRBA area | MRBA Wild Dog Management Plan. Commitment from DBCA. | Ongoing | Executive Officer to prepare autumn and spring bait rack programs in conjunction with MRBA Committee and co-ordinate ground/aerial baiting in conjunction with landholders and DBCA – if the latter are willing to be involved in these activities. |
| In conjunction with the Pilbara RBG engage aircraft contractor for northern area aerial baiting in September/October 2023. | Executive Officer / Landholders northern area | MRBA Wild Dog Management Plan. Joint operational plan with Pilbara RBG | September / October 2024 | In conjunction with the Pilbara RBG prepare specification for aerial baiting services and confirm quote. Engage contractor in accordance with budget allocation. Advise landholders affected and agree on flight paths and schedules. Estimate 17 hours aircraft hire; MRBA to provide fuel. |
| Arrange supply of bait meat for Community Bait Rack Program | Executive Officer | MRBA Wild Dog Management Operational Plan | July 2024 and February 2025 | Prepare specification and determine quantities for the supply of meat for the Community Bait Rack program in conjunction with Rack Co-ordinators. Confirm costs and order meat in accordance with approved budget allocation. |

MRBA 24/25 OPERATIONAL PLAN

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| | | | | |
| Procure bait manufacturing consumables (needle guns, gloves, onion bags, etc). | Executive Officer | MRBA Wild Dog Management Plan | August 2024 & March 2025 | Purchase consumables required for the Community Bait Rack program in accordance with approved budget allocation. |
| Arrange supply of 1080. | Executive Officer & Rack Co-ordinators | MRBA Wild Dog Management Plan | August 2024 & March 2025 | Lodge request for 1080 for the Community Bait Rack program with the MRBA S7 retailer. |
| Advise all landholders of dates & meat quantities for each rack. | Executive Officer and Rack Co-ordinators | MRBA Wild Dog Management Plan | July 2024 & February 2025 | Executive Officer to issue emails / newsletters advising of Community Bait Rack program dates |
| Assist landholders to obtain a Restricted Chemical Permit and ensure all stations are assigned to a rack. | Landholders & Executive Officer | Current RCPs for all landholders. | Ongoing | Executive Officer to assist and advise landholder as required. (MRBA to pay application and amendment fees.) |
| Manufacture and distribute 1080 fresh meat baits. | Rack Co-ordinators & Executive Officer | MRBA Wild Dog Management Plan | September-October 2024 & April-May 2025 | Co-ordinate the manufacture and distribution of baits in accordance with bait rack program. |
| Assist landholders in applying best practise in the implementation of baiting programs. | Doggers, Coordinators & Executive Officer | MRBA Wild Dog Management Plan | Ongoing | Executive Officer to provide information to landholders/coordinators based on the Code of Practise for Safe Handling and Use of 1080. Distribute Code as required. Doggers to provide ongoing technical assistance to land holders. |

MRBA 24/25 OPERATIONAL PLAN

| <u>Dogging Contractor Program</u> <u>(Note: A contractor is referred to as a Licenced Pest Management Technician or LPMT or Dogger)</u> | | | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------|------------------|---|
| Engage Doggers for Yagahorn West, Yagahorn East, Meekatharra West, Cue, Mount Magnet East & Mount Magnet for the 2024/2025 financial year and ensure appropriate licences and insurance policies are in place. | Dogger Coordinators & Executive Officer | MRBA Wild Dog Management Plan | June / July 2024 | Review and renew annual contracts for MRBA Doggers in accordance with approved budget. Check currency of public liability and accident insurance policies, check currency of LPMT licence. Update property listings as required in the contract. Ensure Doggers have an appropriate vehicle and equipment including a SPOT (or similar) tracking device. |
| Coordinate activities of Doggers across the region. | Dogger Co-ordinators | MRBA Wild Dog Management Plan | Ongoing | Monitor dogger activities in accordance with their contract and SPOT tracking device data. Certify monthly invoices from Doggers for payment in accordance with the contract and approved budget. |
| Compile data on the location and number of dogs trapped and number of baits laid per pastoral lease. | Doggers Co-ordinators & Executive Officer | MRBA Wild Dog Management Plan | Ongoing | Compile data on the location and number of dogs trapped and location and number of baits laid. Provide data to Dogger Co-ordinators and the Executive Officer. Upload data to FeralScan. |
| Consolidate data on dogging activities. | Executive Officer | MRBA Wild Dog Management Plan | July 2024 | On the basis of data provided by doggers consolidate information for consideration by the Management Committee and inclusion in the MRBA Annual Report. |

MRBA 24/25 OPERATIONAL PLAN

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|---|--|--|-----------|---|
| <u>DECLARED PLANT CONTROL AND LARGE FERAL HERBIVORE CONTROL PROGRAMS</u> | | | | |
| <u>Declared Plant Control Program</u> | | | | |
| Provide information to landholders on the eradication of Parkinsonia, Mesquite and Cactus. | Executive Officer | | Ongoing | On the basis of farm notes and extension material from DPIRD compile information and provide to landholders on request. |
| Seek grant funding for the control of declared plant pests. | Executive Officer | | Ongoing | Monitor State and Federal NRM and Landcare programs with a view to submitting applications where appropriate. |
| <u>Large Feral Herbivore Control Program</u> | | | | |
| Allocate a minimum of \$15,000 in each financial year and place into a reserve to be used for a LFH shoot in the north of the MRBA area on a three-year cycle. | Executive Officer Secretary/Treasurer | MRBA Large Feral Herbivore Management Plan | July 2024 | Establish a three-year LFH reserve with an annual budget contribution of \$15,000 (minimum). Seek additional external grant funding. |

Performance Indicators

The MRBA have identified a range of indicators that will be used in measuring the success of this 2023/2024 program.

| MRBA operational plan performance indicators | Evidence or data source | Target date | Status |
|---|--|---------------------------|---------------|
| The production of a minimum of 120,000 fresh meat baits for each Community Bait Rack activity and distribution to landholders. | Rack Statistics prepared by Rack Co-ordinators and compiled by the Executive Officer | October 2024 and May 2025 | Planned |

MRBA 24/25 OPERATIONAL PLAN

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|---|--|-------------------------------|----------------|
| <p>Deployment of contract MRBA Doggers for the number of days provided for in the approved budget.</p> | <p>Data provided by Dogger Coordinators and compiled by the Executive Officer. Annual expenditure as reported by the Treasurer.</p> | <p>July 2024</p> | <p>Planned</p> |
| <p>Preparation of a consolidated dogger report detailing location and number of dogs trapped. Uploading of data to FeralScan</p> | <p>Data provided by doggers and Co-ordinators and compiled/uploaded by the Executive Officer and or doggers.</p> | <p>July 2025</p> | <p>Planned</p> |
| <p>Implementation of aerial baiting program involving 17 plane hours. 15,000 plus baits to be dropped.</p> | <p>Bait rack statistics prepared by Ilgarrarie Rack Coordinator and compiled by Executive Officer. Data provided by aerial contractor.</p> | <p>September/October 2024</p> | <p>Planned</p> |

| MRBA Declared Pest Account Budget 2024 2025 | | | | |
|--|-------------|--------------|-------------|------------------|
| REVENUE | | | | |
| Detail | Unit | Qty | Cost | Total |
| Rates Levied - Govt Matched Contribution | | 100% | | \$274,936 |
| Declared Pest Rate | | 80% | | \$219,949 |
| Additional DPA Drawdown | | | | \$0 |
| Rates Reimbursed - CRBA | | | | \$8,828 |
| LFH Program (Sponsored) | | | | \$0 |
| Bait Rack Program (Sponsored) | | | | \$0 |
| Sale of Traps | | | | \$500 |
| Sale of Baits | | | | \$0 |
| Other Income | | | | \$0 |
| TOTAL REVENUE | | | | \$503,713 |
| EXPENDITURE | | | | |
| Wild Dog Control | | | | |
| | | Units | \$ | |
| Aircraft dry hire (1500 baits laid per hour) | Hrs | 17 | \$697 | \$12,500 |
| Bombadier | | | | \$400 |
| Av Gas (60lt per hour) | Lt | 1,020 | \$4 | \$4,080 |
| Extra Av Gas for Nth area | | | | \$0 |
| Sub Total aerial baiting | | | | \$16,980 |
| Meat for Bait Rack program - First Baiting | Kilos | 12,940 | \$6 | \$77,640 |
| Meat for Bait Rack program - Second Baiting | Kilos | 9,440 | \$6 | \$56,640 |
| 1080 concentrate | Lts | | | \$10,000 |
| Sub Total sponsored ground baitings | | | | \$144,280 |
| 1080 impregnated oats | | | | \$0 |
| Strychnine | | | | \$10,000 |
| CPE 1080 Capsules & Lures | | | | \$0 |
| Sub Total chemicals | | | | \$10,000 |
| Traps | | | | \$10,000 |
| Trap parts (chain, plates, springs etc) | | | | \$2,000 |
| Canid Pest Ejectors | | | | \$0 |
| CPE Setting Pliers | | | | \$0 |
| Safety supplies (PPE, gloves, etc.) | | | | \$0 |
| 1080 injector guns | | | | \$1,650 |
| 1080 injector gun maintenance kits | | | | \$500 |
| Funds to support rack coordinators | | | | \$1,750 |

MRBA 24/25 OPERATIONAL PLAN

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|--|------|-----|----------|-------------------|
| Sundries (includes onion bags) | | | | \$900 |
| Freezer repairs (maintenance & servicing) | | | | \$3,000 |
| Freezer power | | | | \$1,250 |
| Rack maintenance | | | | \$3,000 |
| Sub Total Contingencies | | | | \$24,050 |
| | | | | |
| LPMT Mount Magnet East - 100 days | Days | 100 | \$620 | \$62,000 |
| LPMT Mount Magnet (ex AWI) - 100 days | Days | 100 | \$620 | \$62,000 |
| LPMT Yagahorn East - 25 days | Days | 25 | \$620 | \$15,500 |
| LPMT Yagahorn West - 75 days | Days | 75 | \$620 | \$46,500 |
| LPMT Meekatharra West - 50 days | Days | 50 | \$620 | \$31,000 |
| LPMT Cue - 200 days | Days | 200 | \$620 | \$124,000 |
| Spot Track Devices - Purchase | | | | \$400 |
| Spot Track Devices - Annual Subscription | | | | \$2,000 |
| Funds to support dogger co-ordinators | | | | \$2,500 |
| Sub Total Dogging Group Contactors | | | | \$345,900 |
| TOTAL WILD DOG CONTROL | | | | \$541,210 |
| | | | | |
| Declared Plant Control | | | | \$0 |
| Grant Programs | | | | \$0 |
| TOTAL DECLARED PLANT CONTROL | | | | \$0 |
| | | | | |
| LFH Ammunition Subsidy | | | \$2,000 | \$2,000 |
| LFH Control Operation | | | \$20,000 | \$20,000 |
| TOTAL LFH CONTROL | | | | \$22,000 |
| | | | | |
| Administration | | | | |
| Rates Reimbursed to CWBA | | | | \$8,500 |
| Audit, MYOB & Web Site | | | | \$5,000 |
| Insurances | | | | \$5,000 |
| Member RCP and Amendment Fees | | | | \$5,000 |
| Secretary/Treasurer Allowance | | | | \$5,000 |
| Meeting Expenses | | | | \$1,500 |
| Operational & Grant Support - Exec Officer | | | | \$45,000 |
| TOTAL ADMINISTRATION | | | | \$75,000 |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE | | | | \$638,210 |
| DPA Surplus / Deficit | | | | -\$134,497 |

FUNDING the OPERATIONAL PLAN

The budget (above) shows realistic expected costs in order to deliver the 2024/25 Operational Plan for the MRBA's identified actions required over the next 12 months to control declared animal and plant pests in the region.

Clearly, the funds that MRBA receives through the Declared Rate Pest Funding Scheme are insufficient to cover the forecast expenditure. This shortfall has been increasing significantly over recent years, with the standard 4.9% increase provided by the State Government not even close to matching increasing costs such as fuel, maintenance, bait meat, freight, aircraft, and other factors. These increasing costs have been particularly steep in the remote Meekatharra region.

Whilst an increased rate could be requested, this would further burden our landholders who are currently facing increasing management costs of their pastoral properties in the shadow of 2023 which was the driest year for decades, and also presented the lowest market prices for livestock in many years.

In order to deliver the activities we have scheduled for the control of declared pests in the Meekatharra region during 2024/2025, we will need to seek additional funding.