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Dog and Cat Reforms  
Conservation and Land Management Branch  
Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources  
GPO Box 1047  
ADELAIDE, 5001

Livestock SA had previously made a submission in relation to the proposed *Code of Practice for the Wellbeing of Dogs and Cats in Breeding Facilities* and the proposed changes to the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995*.

At about the time that submission was made, the monthly Livestock SA column in the *Stock Journal* was about "Farmers urged to review dog reforms" (May 28, 2015 page 37 – copy attached).

From that article, Livestock SA has received more feedback that there must be a separate code of practice for working dogs. Some of the comments have indicated that parts of the proposed Code would actually be unworkable in relation to working dogs and even, that if enforced, could have severe economic ramifications for the State's livestock industries.

Livestock SA has been alerted to a number of documents such as "A Code of Welfare for Australian Livestock Working Dogs" (available from <http://www.wkc.org.au/PDF/AnimalWelfare-LivestockWorkingDogs.pdf>), "Livestock Working Dogs" and "Critical Facts on Livestock Working Dogs" (copies of these two documents attached).

As already indicated, Livestock SA would be willing to work with the State Government, RSPCA, industry and other relevant interested parties to develop a separate code for working dogs.

Yours faithfully

Geoff Power  
**President Livestock SA**

# Livestock Working Dogs (LWD)

## 1. Definition:

A dog usually kept or proposed to be kept and/or worked:

- On rural land and/or
- By an owner/breeder or lessee who is a Primary Producer, or a person engaged or employed by a Primary Producer, and

Primarily for the purpose of:

- Herding, droving, protecting, tending or working stock or
- Being trained in herding, droving, protecting, tending or working stock.

Australian livestock producers (farm owners) number approximately 91,000. Each has between 3 and 4 working dogs on average at one time. This figure does not include contractors etc.

## 2. Who breeds Livestock Working Dogs? Who purchases Livestock Working Dogs?

(As per the above definition of the dogs)

**Farm owners, managers, overseers or stationhands engaged in enterprises running livestock. Also livestock contractors and livestock trucking companies.**

**Retirees from farming wishing to have a hobby which keeps them active and brings in a little extra income.**

**Only 30% of users of LWDs order them from breeders well prior to time of requirement of the dog.**

- **The breeder is usually first contacted within a week of the pup or dog being required.**
- **Breeders must have a selection of pups and dogs available at all times to remain viable.**
- **Parents of pups and sale dogs starting or started in work must be able to be demonstrated in work on livestock.**
- **Dogs need to look well and be healthy at all times.**

## 3. Breeding “Facilities”:

- **Majority on farm. No special office** etc. Buyers who have travelled long distances, will usually be seated at the kitchen table whilst Invoices and stud papers (if available) are being processed.

## 4. Kennels:

- **Practical, easily maintained and portable. Protection, comfort and adequate space for the dogs.**

## 5. Staff:

- **The breeder and their family** and a trusted friend or stockman to care for dogs in the absence of the family.

## **6. Breeds of LWDs:**

Kelpies, Border Collies and crosses of these make up the majority. Coolies, Smithfields and Australian Cattle dogs are also bred.

## **7. Demographic of dogs you could expect to see on a breeder's farm:**

Depending on whether a breeder chooses to breed a general purpose dog and acquires outside replacement dogs and/or services; therefore has fewer numbers or; if the breeder has families of dogs with different working traits, requiring larger numbers.

- **Many different working styles and traits available in LWDs.**
- **Farmers require individual dogs to perform tasks in a particular way.**
- **Breeding and selection of dogs with the required traits, and having them 'on hand' when a farmer wishes to purchase them is an ongoing challenge for breeders.**

**If the dog does not naturally have the required traits it will not be successful at that task. In paddock work, no amount of training will alter this. In yard work, with considerable training input, the dog will be less efficient.**

- **Breeders with selected families of dogs are critical to maintain genetic diversity within the breeds.**
- **They supply the "seedstock" for the smaller studs.**
- **It takes many years experience and proof of progeny in work before a breeder becomes a supplier of stud dogs, provides bitches for lease, or services of dogs to bitches owned by others.**
- **Breeders with smaller studs must purchase dogs, and services to dogs from others, in order maintain their breeding stock.**

## **Numbers of dogs:**

### **Depending on size and status of stud.**

- Between 3 and 12 females and 2 to 5 males of breeding age per breeder, also
- 4 to 10 young dogs; 3mths to 18mths, being **assessed** for future breeders and being **trained** in work.
- 2 to 5 retired working and/or breeding dogs.
- **Older LWDs are not easily rehomed. They are accustomed to living and working in their own 'pack'; often not used to being indoors; and unused to noises such as occur in towns.**

## **8. Breeding practices:**

### **Females:**

- **Generally commence breeding at between 2 and 3 years of age**, when mature and proven in work.
- A bitch may be a minimum of 5 years old before her own daughters are proven as suitable workers/ breeders. She may be bred to one sire, if a particular mating is outstanding, or to different sires to spread her genetics. The female progeny of bitches which breed top class working stock are sought after as potential breeders.
- **Number of times the bitch is bred from is governed by:** Her health. (LWDs are generally very healthy). Her fertility. The demand for the working traits she breeds.
- **When there is a high success rate in progeny as good workers the breeder is very confident in the predictability of success of pups from future litters in the farm working environment.**
- There is only a demand for her pups **from other breeders** if she is well bred and her progeny are proven as being exceptional in work.

#### **Litter sizes:**

- Vary from 4 to 10 with an average of 6.
- Some bitches may have **2 or 3 litters in their lifetimes** in order to supply pups with particular traits to farmers and to preserve a family,
- Others may have **6 or 7 litters in their lifetimes** to fill orders from farmers and also to preserve their good genetics.
- The fertility of females declines very rapidly from 7 years and few are bred from after 8 years of age.

**The average number of pups bred per individual WKC member breeders per year is fewer than 20.**

#### **Males:**

- **Generally commence breeding at between 3 to 4 years of age** and well proven in work.
- **Most average no more than 4 matings a year.**
- **The average age for a male before** being sought to provide services to females owned by others is **5 to 6 years.**
- **Only an extremely good male** would be offered as many as **10 bitches in total** in a year and this would not continue for more than 2 years at the most.
- Older proven sires of good workers are in demand as breeders, but would rarely be offered more than 5 or 6 bitches in a year.
- Males are generally fertile for longer than females and individuals at 13 years of age and older have sired litters with no harm to their health. The only reason males of that age would be bred from is to re-introduce their genetics into a family of dogs to benefit the line.

#### **6. Breed Organizations:**

The main two, covering the majority of LWDs are:

1. The Working Kelpie Council of Australia Inc. (WKC) is the registrar and breed society for the Australian Livestock Working Kelpie (ALWK). It is a National body and over the last 50 years has governed registrations of ALWKs world wide. These dogs have been bred specifically for livestock work and are genetically different \* from the ANKC registered Australian Kelpies which are selected and bred for bench showing. Australian Livestock Working Kelpies (WKC reg) are not permitted in the stud register of the ANKC.

- **WKC registered breeders adhere to a Breeders' Code as well as the Code of Welfare for Livestock Working Dogs.**
- **All WKC registered Kelpies carry a Working Guarantee.**

2. Sheepdog Workers Associations. State and National bodies. Predominantly Border Collies but purebred dogs of LWD breeds can be registered.

\* Farm Dog Project, University of Sydney NSW 2015