



Wild Dog Exclusion Fence Vegetation Clearance Policy

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Balonne Shire Council supports biosecurity of agricultural lands through its Biosecurity Plan and wild dog exclusion fencing (WDEF), kept effective through regular maintenance, fire protection and other wild dog control methods.

This policy falls directly under Council's Biosecurity Plan 2019-2024 that supports the 5m clearance of vegetation external to WDEF boundary fences. This is to allow adequate construction access and regular ongoing maintenance and operational access to ensure the biosecurity integrity of these expensive specialist fences. The policy also reduces the likelihood of excessive clearing and improves boundary fire lines and state and local liability for fire damage from adjacent vegetation.

2. PRINCIPLES

The Balonne Shire Council Corporate Plan 2018 – 2023 states that the Environmental Goal is 'To enhance, protect and sustain the environment, ensuring a triple bottom line approach of balancing social and economic needs with environmental goals. This includes the environmental Program Area of 'Biosecurity, pest management and stock route planning'.

The State Policy for Vegetation Management 2014 Principle 2.1.1 states 'Regulation of vegetation clearing is needed to prevent the loss of biodiversity at state, regional and local levels; Principle 2.2.1 states 'Vegetation plays a critical role in maintaining ecological processes and preventing land degradation (p.5).

The Planning Regulation 2017 Schedule 21 Pt.2 s5 exempts, for land dedicated as a road under the Land Act, clearing vegetation '...that is necessary to maintain a boundary fence to the maximum width of 3m...' (f); '...that is carried out by a local government in accordance with a biosecurity plan made by the local government under the Biosecurity Act 2014...' (b)(ii); and '...that is carried out by a local government..., if the clearing is necessary to construct or maintain road transport infrastructure...' (a)(i).

The Queensland Biosecurity Act 2014 chapter 3 obligates local government to manage biosecurity matter (s48), have a biosecurity plan (s53) to include strategies, activities, and responsibilities for achieving objectives.

Council's Biosecurity Plan 2019 - 2024 Section 4.1 Species Prioritisation enacts the Planning Regulation 2017 by stating: 'It is recognised that in Balonne Shire Wild Dog Exclusion Fencing (WDEF) is a key part of controlling many of the high priority pest animals and that adequate access is necessary. A 5m external vegetation clearance on road boundaries is provided for Wild Dog Exclusion Fences under Planning Regulation 2017 exemptions to local authorities. This clearing must be conducted in accordance with Balonne Shire's Wild Dog Exclusion Fence Vegetation Clearance Policy and associated procedure for adequate access for construction, maintenance, and frequent patrols associated with WDEF' (p.19).

This policy recognises unique 5m access requirements associated with WDEF justifying exemption beyond that of the 3m vegetation exemption for standard stock fences:

- That for construction WDEF mesh fence-footers face externally with mesh erected from outside the boundary, commonly by plant and equipment exceeding 4m width.
- That for maintenance to both ensure the WDEF fence-footer seal with the ground and vegetation clearance, the external ground is graded, and that common effective grader blades exceed 4m width
- That the avoidance of, a potentially catastrophic breach, of WDEF requires frequent ongoing vehicle patrols on the external boundary to inspect and repair damage, washouts, and animal digging; and that the additional height and width of WDEF requires greater clearance by vehicles.



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The added boundary vegetation clearance offered by 5m provides a more adequate fire line and reduced potential for claims for fire damage by landholders for fire originating from road corridors/stock routes.

The policy aids the loss of biodiversity, both by supporting WDEF, and by legitimising a moderate 2m extension, on Council's behalf, to the allowable 3m vegetation clearance, such that Council has an added interest in ensuring that clearance is not exceeded.

3. SCOPE

The policy is relevant to fencing landholders and officers associated with agriculture, wildlife, biosecurity, conservation, and transport. The policy is in accordance with the Balonne Shire Council Biosecurity Plan 2019 – 2024 Section 4.1 and relates solely to Wild Dog Exclusion Fences. Standard stock fences are outside the scope of the policy.

4. RESPONSIBILITY

Balonne Shire Council; Department of Natural Resources Mines and Energy; and Department of Transport and Main Roads

5. DEFINITIONS

- Balonne Shire Council BSC, Council
- Vegetation Codes Refer DNRME General Guide to the Vegetation Clearing Codes
- Wild Dog Exclusion Fence Primarily post and mesh fencing, commonly over 1.65m high with a 300mm external mesh foot at the base, designed to exclude high-priority invasive pest animals, such as wild dogs, pigs, and foxes from impacting on livestock, crops, or wildlife. Other feral animal exclusion fence designs with a height and/or width exceeding standard stock fences may qualify.

6. POLICY

1. Council will approve 5 metres clearance of vegetation external to Wild Dog Exclusion Fences in accordance with its Biosecurity Plan 2019-2024 Section 4.1 (as amended July 2020) and for access and patrol in accordance with the Planning Regulation 2017, Schedule 21 (Exempt Clearing work), Part 2 (Clearing for Particular Land), Section 5 (Land dedicated as a road under Land Act) "For land that is dedicated as a road under the Land Act, clearing vegetation –

(b) that is carried out by a local government -

(ii) in accordance with a biosecurity plan made by the local government under the Biosecurity Act 2014

And

(a) That is carried out by a local government, or by or for the chief executive (transport), if the clearing –

(i) is necessary to construct or maintain road transport infrastructure or to source construction material for roads

2. Landholders may be authorised to clear the 5 metres on behalf of Council in accordance with a WDEF Vegetation Clearance Application Procedure to include:

(a) that the landholder may be required to register as a contractor with Council and comply with contractor requirements; and



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- (b) that clearing will relate only to vegetation categories A, B, R and X; and
- (c) that all cleared vegetation must be removed and disposed of on the landholder's property
- (d) that safe exit points and standard road silt management devices be provided; and
- (e) that for other vegetation categories or for additional vegetation clearance, or for clearance within a watercourse, landholders must seek State authorisation; and
- (f) that permission must be sought from the landowner for land not owned or managed by Council; and
- (g) that where the 5 metres has been exceeded without permission, at any time on land owned or managed by Council, the landholder may be subject to applicable fines or prosecution

7. LEGAL PARAMETERS

- *Planning Regulation 2017*
- *Biosecurity Act 2014*
- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Stock Route Management Act 2002*
- *Vegetation Management Act 1999*
- *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*
- *Nature Conservation Act 1992*
- *Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2019*
- *State Policy for Vegetation Management 2014 V4*

8. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- Balonne Shire Council Biosecurity Plan 2019 – 2024
- DNRME General guide to the vegetation clearing codes