



WHAT IS SHARING TRACKS?

Working in animal health and management has its challenges, especially for those working in rural and remote communities. Sharing Tracks is developed and distributed by Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities (AMRRIC). It has been designed to share lived experiences and give you the latest information in companion animal health and management. We hope that this newsletter will include your stories from your communities. A network for collaboration and support, to share ideas and knowledge for program planning and service delivery.

Although Sharing Tracks is developed and distributed by Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities (AMRRIC), our hope is that most of the newsletter's content will reflect the voice of our readers and their communities to help others to understand different approaches to companion animal health and management.

Do you have a question or story you would like to share in our next issue? Feel free to contact us at sharingtracks@amrric.org

**Does your organisation have an achievement or success story you would like to share with other people working in animal health and management?
We would love to hear from you!**

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EDUCATION FEATURE

BABY ANIMALS BELONG IN THE BUSH

People working in communities sometimes encounter animals - like horses, pigs, donkeys, camel, buffalo and cattle - that have been taken from their mothers and are being kept as pets. No matter how well intentioned, the reality is, wild animals don't make the best house pets.

These animals have adapted to survive on country with other animals of their own kind and keeping them in a house or even within the community can cause problems; not only for the animals themselves but also for people and other animals in the community. Wild animals are also known to cause damage to local infrastructure, busting pipes and causing damage to cars if a crash happens.

**CLICK TO WATCH
ON YOUTUBE**



That's why Roper Gulf Regional Council, with help from AMRRIC and veterinarian, Dr Sam Phelan, decided to make "Baby Animals Belong in the Bush" - an animation that talks about the problems that can arise from keeping wild animals as pets.

Created by Christian Cabajosa at Carbajosa Designs, this family-friendly animation is a great resource to help communities understand why wild and feral animals are best left on country and the type of problems that can arise from keeping them in community.

The animation is available in both English, and Kriol, thanks to help from Meigim Kriol Stongbala and ARDS Aboriginal Corporation, who assisted with translation. If you think this animation would be useful as a resource for people living in your community, it is freely available [on Youtube](#), or you can contact us for a downloadable copy.

**Has your organisation
made an educational
resource you want to
share? Send us an email at
sharingtracks@amrric.org**

FEATURED MEDICINE: DOG AND CAT “BIRTH CONTROL”

Preventing cats and dogs from breeding up is an important part of animal health and management programs. The best way to do this is to have cats and dogs desexed, which permanently stops them from having babies.

But in remote areas, having access to veterinary services to provide surgical desexing procedures can be challenging, especially during the wet season. Desexing surgery can also be quite expensive – and requires special equipment and facilities to be done safely. Some animal owners may also have concern about putting their cat or dog through anaesthesia and surgery. Because of these challenges, veterinarians sometimes recommend temporary contraceptives or “animal birth control” that temporarily stops dogs and cats from breeding without anaesthesia or surgery.

There are several medicines that contain hormones and can be used for “birth control” in dogs and cats. The most common ones that are available in Australia include Depo-Provera® (Pfizer), Suprelorin® (Virbac). These medicines are only available by prescription and can only be given by a vet.

Superlorin® is a birth control implant that is approved for use in boy dogs that lasts for 6-12 months. It is not approved for use in girl dogs, but some vets have used it “off-label” and it does appear to work. One of the problems is that when this medicine is given to girl dogs over the age of 16 weeks, it can cause them to go into heat, meaning that they could have another litter of puppies before the medicine starts working. If all the girl dogs get the medicine at the same time, this could mean A LOT of puppies before the medicine takes effect. Suprelorin is an injectable implant that sits under the skin and slowly is administered to the animal over time.

Depo-Provera® is a birth control injection that is given to girl dogs by a vet every 3-5 months. The injection is a small needle given under the skin. It is not used in boy dogs. This medicine should not be given to pregnant dogs or dogs that have had a heat in the past 1-2 months. This medicine can cause serious, life-threatening side effects (like the uterus filling with pus). These side effects are more likely when this medicine is given repeatedly to control an animal’s breeding.

PROS OF DOG BIRTH CONTROL



- Cost of a single dose is less than the cost of desexing (in the short-term)
- Doesn’t require anaesthesia or surgery however because Suprelorin is quite a large needle, some dogs might require sedation
- Can be done at the dog or cat’s house
- Good for owners who aren’t sure if they want their animal desexed



Is there a medicine or treatment you want to learn more about? Send us an email at sharingtracks@amrric.org

CONS OF DOG BIRTH CONTROL



- Effects of these medicines are temporary – so they need to be given regularly to stop dogs from making puppies; this can be hard with inconsistent access to vets, and it can be hard to find all of the dogs that are due for another dose. If a dog misses a dose, it can breed.
- Because these medicines need to be given repeatedly to stop the animal from breeding, they often end up being more expensive than desexing in the long term.
- Some studies have shown aggression in dogs treated with birth control implants; so, it is important for people working in animal management to watch for this in treated dogs.
- Birth control implants in girl dogs can cause the dogs to go on heat, and they can get pregnant if mated.
- These medicines can have serious side effects if they are not used correctly; this is why they should always be given by a vet.
- May not have the same effects on mating behaviour as surgical desexing which means that dogs may still be at risk for STDs like canine transmissible venereal tumour (CTVT).
- The problems these medicines can cause in the uterus can make any future surgical desexing much more difficult (and risky for the animal).

CONCLUSIONS

There are many things to consider when choosing the best way to control cat and dog breeding in your community, which is why it is so important to talk to your vet about a plan that works for your community. Dog birth control can be very useful for owners that aren’t sure if they want their dog desexed, or to stop dogs from breeding before the next vet desexing visit. But even though these medicines may seem safer than surgery, they can cause serious side effects if they are given incorrectly, which is why having a vet supervise any dog birth control program is really important. Although a single dose of dog birth control is cheaper than desexing, in

the long-term with repeated doses, birth control usually works out to be much more expensive. While dog birth control can be very useful in certain situations, when given to the right dogs, AMRRIC believes that surgical desexing is still the best long-term solution for managing breeding in cat and dog populations. When animal birth control is used, it should only be given under the supervision of a vet.

For more information about options for breeding control in cats and dogs, including the pros and cons of different types of treatment, check out the chapter on “[Breeding Control for Cats and Dogs](#)” in AMRRIC’s EHP manual.

NEW SCIENCE ON THE BROWN DOG TICK DISTRIBUTION – WHAT IT MEANS FOR EHRLICHIOSIS RISK IN SOUTHERN AUSTRALIA

THE GEOGRAPHIC LIMITS AND LIFE HISTORY OF THE TROPICAL BROWN DOG TICK, RHIPICEPHALUS LINNAEI (AUDOUIN, 1826), IN AUSTRALIA WITH NOTES ON THE SPREAD OF EHRLICHIA CANIS

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A new study by Teo and colleagues (2024), shows that brown dog tick has an established distribution much further south than was previously thought. This is especially true for South Australia and Western Australia.

The red shading on the map shows the distribution of the brown dog tick based on the study by Teo and Colleagues (2024). This means that brown dog ticks can be live anywhere in the red shaded area. This is really important for dogs living in communities in these areas, as this tick species is responsible for spreading tick sickness (Ehrlichiosis) across the country. Anywhere this type of tick can be found, dogs are at risk of getting this serious disease.

You can check out the article [here](#).

Year-round tick prevention is the best way to protect your dog from the brown dog tick, and tick-borne diseases such as Ehrlichiosis. If you live in an area where brown dog ticks are present, have a yarn with your veterinary service provider about what treatment options are available in your area, and how to protect your community from brown dog ticks and the diseases they carry.

For more information on Ehrlichiosis, check out our [website](#) - we have a number of resources on our website that can help to provide more information on keeping your community safe from this disease.

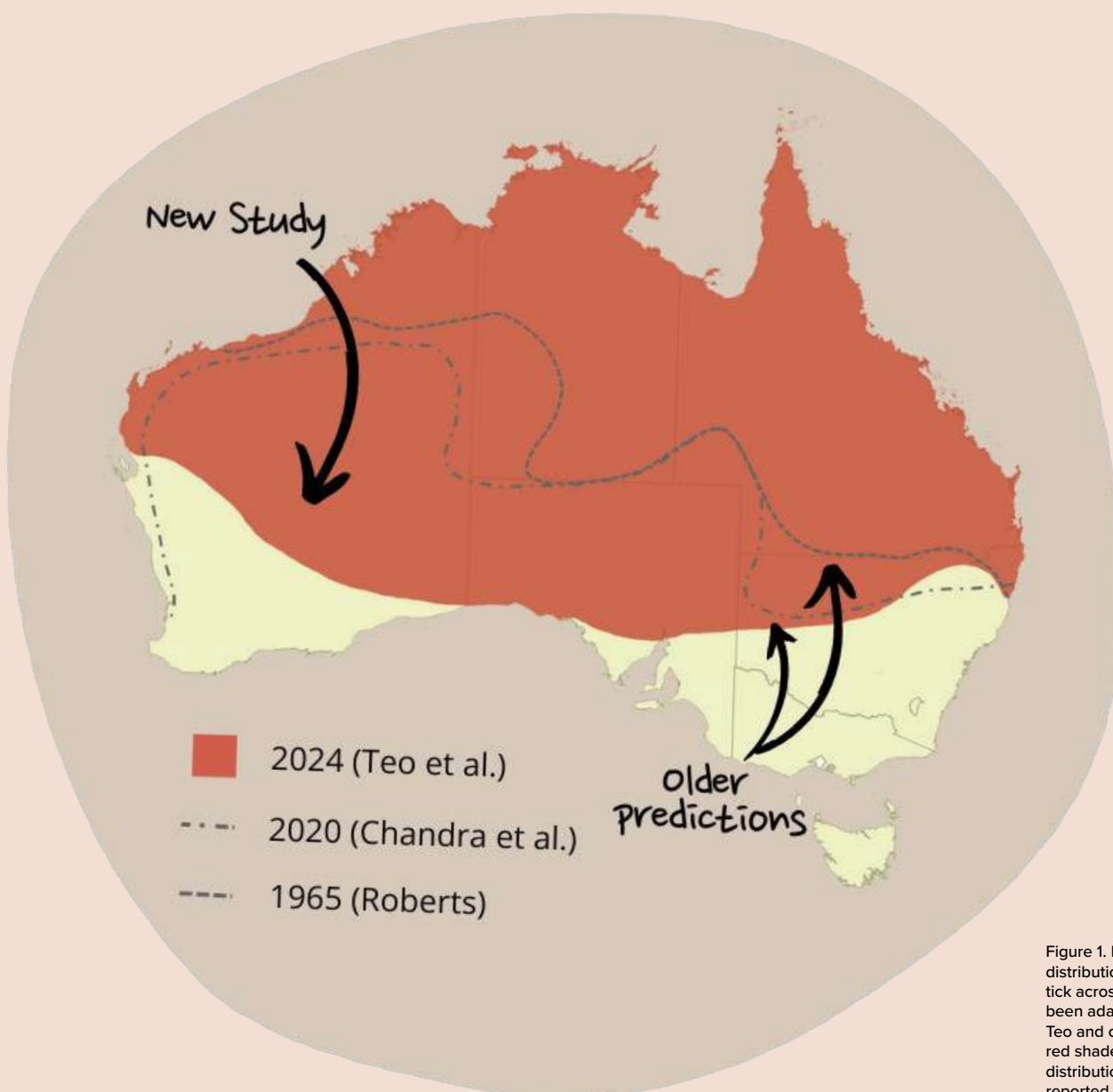


Figure 1. Map showing the distribution of the brown dog tick across Australia, which has been adapted from Figure 1 in Teo and colleagues (2024). The red shaded area shows the distribution that was recently reported by Teo and colleagues earlier this year, compared to the dashed lines that represent previous estimates from Chandra and colleagues in 2020 (click [here](#) for the article) and Roberts in 1965 (click [here](#) for the article).

A DAY WITH NIKKI GONG



WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

Nikki Gong

TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF

I have lived with my family in the Bloomfield/Wujal Wujal area in Far North Queensland for about 20 years. I'm originally from Cairns and on my dad's side our family is from the Torres Strait Islands at the Tip of Cape York. We spend a lot of our time swimming in freshwater creeks, on our boat fishing at the reef and at home with our dogs.

WHAT COMMUNITY DO YOU WORK WITH?

Wujal Wujal, Cape York

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN INVOLVED IN ANIMAL HEALTH AND MANAGEMENT

I have worked with animal rescue groups for the past 7 years and then started the role as the Animal Management worker for Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council about 2 years ago.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART ABOUT WORKING IN ANIMAL HEALTH AND MANAGEMENT?

Happy & healthy dogs living with their owners.

WHY DID YOU WANT TO BECOME INVOLVED IN ANIMAL HEALTH AND MANAGEMENT?

I really like animals and caring for them. I'm also passionate about working with community members to achieve better health outcomes for people, animals and the environment.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OR SUCCESS STORIES THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE ABOUT THE WORK THAT YOU DO?

Wujal Wujal has a very good animal management program. Most of the time our dog population is under control, we have high desexing rates particularly in female dogs. We have a very strong rehoming program. I really enjoy being out & about on the street engaging with community members discussing issues and interacting with the animals & owners at house-to-house visits.

We focus a lot on education and lots of our accomplishments and successes come from what information we share with pet owners. When people understand how to care for their animals and what to do when their pets are sick or hurt, it's a successful story.



Would you like to be featured in one of our newsletters? Drop us a email at sharingtracks@amrric.org

DISEASE FEATURE:

CANINE TRANSMISSIBLE VENEREAL TUMOUR (CTVT)

WHAT IS CTVT?

Canine Transmissible Venereal Tumour or CTVT is a contagious tumour of dogs, especially those that are not desexed and are allowed to roam. The tumour is usually found on the genitals (boy and girl bits) but is sometimes seen on other parts of the body, like on the skin or inside the nose or mouth.

HOW DO DOGS GET CTVT?

Unlike other tumours, CTVT spreads directly from dog to dog during mating. It can also be spread through other normal dog behaviours such as sniffing, licking or biting.



WHAT DOES CTVT LOOK LIKE?

CTVT looks like a lump on or inside the boy or girl parts that may bleed easily. Owners may not see the lump but may see blood coming from the genitals. CTVT doesn't usually make dogs seem sick, but the tumour can make it hard for the dog to pee. These tumours can also get infected with germs, and these infections can make the dogs very sick. When it's bad, they can drip blood.

HOW DO YOU PREVENT CTVT?

CTVT is a dog STD (sexually transmitted disease). Desexing is the best way protect dogs from getting CTVT, because it is mostly spread by mating. But CTVT can take a long time (months or even years) to get big enough to see or cause problems. So, CTVT may appear in some dogs even after they have been desexed.

HOW DO YOU TREAT CTVT?

CTVT can be treated with chemo medicine from a vet. But these anti-cancer medicines used to treat CTVT are expensive and need to be given regularly by a vet over several weeks or months, which can be hard in a community.

It is also important to make sure that all of the dogs' poo and wee is cleaned up while they are being treated as the medicine comes out in animal waste and can be dangerous for people.

To get rid of the tumour, dogs need an injection into their veins once a week for multiple weeks and this medicine needs to be given by a vet. Unless there is a vet clinic nearby, treatment may not be an option for most dog owners. The vet can also do surgery to get rid of CTVT, but it might come back again. If a dog's CTVT can't be treated, euthanasia may be the kindest option.



Is there a disease you want to learn more about? Let us know! We would be happy to research it for you and get advice from our veterinary team.

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE



The 14th NATSEIH conference took place in Narm (Melbourne), Victoria in May. While the conference has an environmental health focus, animal management was featured in a number of posters and presentations including:

- Nikki Gong (Wujal Wujal) and Bonny Cumming (AMRRIC) talked about emergency management of cats and dogs during events like natural disasters, using the recent flooding in north Queensland as an example. Bonny also presented a poster on essential facts about ringworm for environmental and animal health workers.
- Jo Walker from Wildlife Health Australia discussed environmental health and emerging diseases from wildlife.
- Kirsten Ross from Strongyloides Australia and her research team presented a poster on a collaborative approach to tackling Strongyloides worms in people and dogs in remote communities.
- Bindee Davis, a veterinary student from the University of Adelaide presented a poster developed in conjunction with AMRRIC, discussing the benefits of community-led research in addressing knowledge gaps in animal health and management in rural and remote communities and highlighted her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine research project which looked at whether cold sterilisation of surgical instruments is effective in field-based programs.
- Susan Stafford (Shire of Derby/West Kimberly) and Michelle Hayes (AMRRIC) discussed collaborative approaches to dog and cat management in the Kimberly to help improve the health of people, animals and the environment.
- Lachlan Chapman from NT Health talked about pigs in communities and the risks of Japanese Encephalitis (JEV), a disease that can spread from pigs to people by mosquitos.



We would like to congratulate all of the conference presenters on the work they are doing to help support a diverse range of community health programs. The conference runs every two years and is a great opportunity for people working in animal health and management to meet other people working across the human, animal and environmental health sectors, and to learn about some of the amazing projects that are underway in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia. For more information visit: <https://natsieh.com.au>.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

HOW DO I GET A COPY OF THE NEWSLETTER?

The easiest way to stay up to date with the latest edition of Sharing Tracks is to subscribe to our newsletter, by clicking [here](#). This will add you to a mailing list that is only used for the newsletter. You can opt out of receiving the newsletter at any time. You can also keep up to date by following AMRRIC's Facebook page. If you miss an issue, you can also check out our [newsletter archive](#).

HOW OFTEN IS THE NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED?

Right now, a new edition of Sharing Tracks will be sent out by four times a year, but we're always open to suggestions. Don't want to wait for the next newsletter? No problem. Our [social media pages](#) will be updated as news, articles and stories become available.

HOW DO I SUBMIT AN ARTICLE OR ASK QUESTION?

If you want to ask a question or include an article in our next newsletter, simply send us an email at sharingtracks@amrric.org, or send us a message on our [Facebook page](#).

