

The Feral Pig in Australia



The Feral Pig
(*Sus scrofa*)

Impact

Feral pigs (*Sus scrofa*) occupy close to 40% of mainland Australia and cause significant damage to both agricultural sectors and the environment.

Agricultural damage is principally via lamb predation, competition with stock for food, infrastructure damage and disease spread, and is estimated to cost farmers more than \$100 million annually.

Although less well documented, the environmental damage wrought by feral pigs, including predation and competition with native animals and spreading weeds, has resulted in them being listed as a Threatening Process of endangered species and ecological communities.

Pig Facts

The biology and ecology of the feral pig make them an extremely successful animal in the Australian environment. They are highly adaptable, with populations occurring from semi-arid rangelands to alpine environments and tropical rainforests.

Their high breeding capacity can allow numbers to build up quickly at any time, as long as food and water are available. Feral pigs can have up to two litters every 12-15 months and they can produce 10 piglets in each litter. They are omnivorous and switch food preferences depending upon available resources.

Pig control

Management of the impacts of feral pigs in Australia mainly occurs through trapping, ground and aerial shooting, and poison baiting. Recreational hunting and commercial harvesting operations exist throughout much of the species range, however the two activities likely affect less than 20% of the total pig population annually. The Pest Animal Control CRC is currently reviewing all forms of feral pig control for the Australian Government Department of Environment and Heritage.

The Pest Animal Control CRC is working closely with Animal Control Technologies Australia to develop a manufactured feral pig bait. The bait will provide increased target specificity and effectiveness when undertaking either aerial or ground based baiting campaigns in a wide variety of habitats. The bait is also being adapted to carry disease vaccines and contraceptives. This research is funded by Meat & Livestock Australia Ltd and the National Feral Animal Control Program.

The Pest Animal Control CRC has also been investigating innovative means of controlling feral pig populations by looking at their molecular ecology. This research is being undertaken in conjunction with Murdoch University and the Wildlife and Exotic Disease Preparedness Program.

Benefiting the environment
through pest animal control



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