



▶▶▶ Improving feral animal management

The Queensland Murray-Darling Committee (QMDC) and the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) have received funding through the Blueprint for the Bush initiative to undertake a coordinated feral animal control project. This project will undertake the following activities to determine the extent of feral animal damage (especially pigs) on production and biodiversity, and the most effective combination of feral animal control methods:

1. Coordinate control of feral pigs, cats and foxes across specific sites using a range of methods
2. Monitor feral pig numbers through harvester (hunter)/landholder surveys, and by helicopter
3. Determine the cost of feral pig damage to crop production
4. Determine the effect harvesters have on pig populations across specific sites
5. Monitor feral pig damage to the environment and biodiversity

QMDC and DPI&F intend to build this project into a broad-scale control program with landholders, whilst undertaking solid research to inform our future investment into feral animals.

Site selection

This project will take place across six specific, but large, sites within the Queensland Murray Darling Basin (QMDB). Each site will incorporate several properties in order to accurately determine the scope of damage and control. Three of these sites will have a coordinated control program (baiting, trapping, harvesting, and aerial shooting), with the remaining three having the standard harvesting that occurs at present, acting as monitoring sites.

The six sites are currently being identified in consultation with landholders, and consideration will be given to feral pig numbers at each site, quality of crops/production in each area, quality of biodiversity in each area and, most importantly, willingness of landholders to be involved in the program.

Coordinated control

QMDC and DPI&F will identify the most effective control methods for reducing, and keeping down, the numbers of feral pigs, foxes and cats. The types of control methods to be tested will include baiting, trapping, and aerial shooting.



Feral pig harvesting

Within the QMDC area, and specifically within the identified six sites, QMDC and DPI&F will determine how many pigs are removed by pig harvesters and hunters. This may be an under-valued control method and it will be important to determine the value of harvesting/hunting to control feral pigs.





Feral pig damage to production

This part of the project will involve determining the level and cost of damage from feral pigs to grain crops by surveying landholders and harvesters, and conducting field assessments. This part of the project will also help to assess the effectiveness of harvesting to reduce feral pig damage.

Feral pig damage to biodiversity

There are five species of reptiles in southern Queensland known to be directly affected by the competition or predation of feral pigs, foxes and cats. QMDC and DPI&F will assess if control of feral animals will benefit these reptiles (and, potentially, other species). This assessment will include a range of monitoring activities to further understand the degree of impact these feral animals have on biodiversity, such as using stomach samples from pigs, foxes and cats to analyse what types of species they are preying upon.



GPS and radio tracking

QMDC and DPI&F will track the movements of some feral pigs, foxes and cats to identify the areas in the landscape they are using. Tracking these movements will also contribute to knowledge of the damage to production and biodiversity these feral animals cause.

Human health link

Finally, QMDC and DPI&F will collect samples throughout the course of the project to determine any health implications feral pigs may have on commercial piggeries and humans.

Your involvement

QMDC and DPI&F will be contacting landholders to seek their support in undertaking this project. Alternatively, if you have any queries about this project, please contact the project coordinators:

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