



What is relative humaneness and why is it important?



This article follows our first (published in last month's newsletter) in a series focusing on animal welfare with feral pig control.

Some key questions we need to think about include:

- Are some control methods more humane than others?
- How do we know?
- Why do we need to know?

The [Relative Humaneness Model](#) was developed to provide land managers and operators with a practical and reliable methodology to use to identify the humaneness and welfare aspects of different vertebrate pest control methods. This complex work was led by the NSW Department of Primary Industries. The model for assessing the relative humaneness of pest animal control methods (2nd edition) can be found [here](#).

This model helps to bring attention to the welfare impacts prior to and during death for different control methods. There are two parts to the model: Part A examines the impact of a method on overall welfare and the duration of the impact, while Part B examines the intensity and duration of suffering of the control method.

The model has been used to develop a matrix (figure 1) for each of the main animal species targeted for control, including feral pigs. The methods in the green shaded area are considered to be more humane compared to those in the orange shaded area. Some methods that scored poorly on the matrix should not be used, such as warfarin and CSSP (yellow phosphorous), especially with the availability of more humane options.

The relative humaneness model can be used by land managers, together with other factors including efficacy, cost-effectiveness, practicality, target specificity and operator safety, to choose control methods, as feral pig management programs are developed, planned and implemented.

Importantly, the humaneness of a control method is highly dependent on the way in which the control method is applied, and the skill, training and experience of the operator in humane destruction. For example, the welfare impacts prior to ground shooting can be minimal if animals are not startled or chased and a clean fatal brain shot is achieved, resulting in a higher humaneness rating.

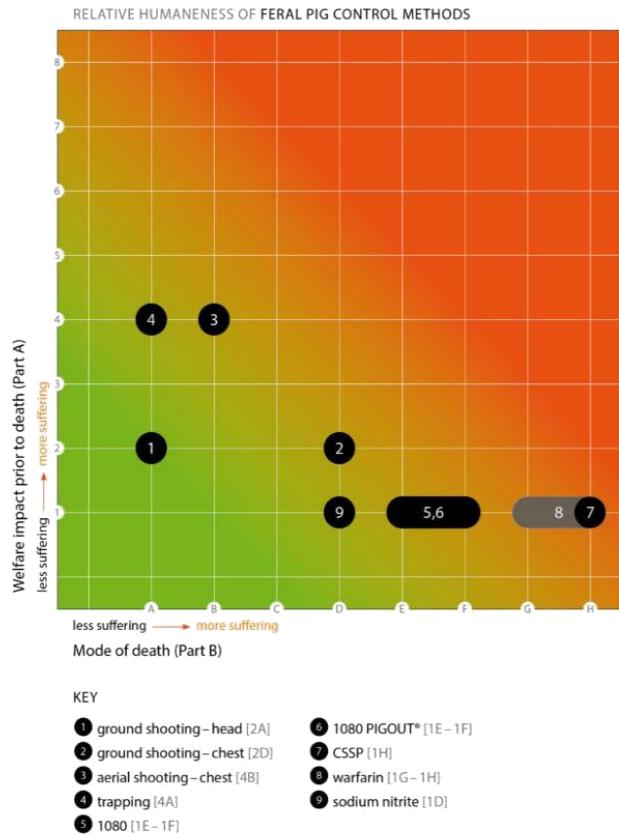


Figure 1: Relative Humaneness Matrix for Feral Pigs

There is an ongoing need to improve the humaneness of methods used to control vertebrate pests to reduce negative impacts on both target and non-target animals. For feral pig population control, this has been enabled by the development of [HOGGONE bait](#), which contains microencapsulated sodium nitrite, providing land managers with a humane, fast-acting, targeted and effective solution.

Many of the negative impacts from control methods can be reduced, or even prevented, by standardising the way that they are applied. The codes of practice and national standard operating procedures for feral pigs that can be downloaded from the [PestSmart website](#) aim to address this issue.

If you have a specific question relating to this topic, please send an email to contact@feralpigs.com.au.

The NFPAP would like to extend our thanks to members of our stakeholder group who have expertise in animal welfare for their valuable input