



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a feral pig?

A feral pig is defined as a pig that is not kept in captivity. In Australia, feral pigs are of the species *Sus scrofa* and it is not known when pigs were first introduced into Australia. Pigs become feral after escaping, following deliberate release to start new colonies or being unrestrained. The first official record of pigs was in Sydney after the arrival of the First Fleet.

How many feral pigs are there in Australia?

The actual number of feral pigs in Australia is not known. The average feral pig population was estimated in 1990 to be 13.5 million (with a 95% confidence limit, ranging from 3.5 million to 23.5 million), and are present across 45% of Australia's landmass. The Australian Bureau of Agricultural Resources, Economics and Sciences (ABARES) are working to update population distribution and density maps, supported by information provided by all states and territories. These outcomes will be provided by June 2022.

Do all states have feral pigs? Where are feral pigs located / found in Australia?

Yes, feral pigs can be found in all states and territories of Australia. They are widely distributed in Queensland, New South Wales, Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory, with more dispersed populations in Victoria, Western Australia, Flinders Island and Kangaroo Island. The location and distribution of feral pigs in the landscape are closely related to water courses and floodplains, available feed and vegetative cover.

What are feral pig's habitat preferences?

Feral pigs are very adaptive and occupy a wide variety of habitats in Australia. These include rainforests, monsoon forests, paperbark swamps, open floodplains, marsh areas, semi-arid floodplains, dry woodlands, sub-alpine grasslands and forests. They prefer living near water sources (in hot weather they need water twice daily). As feral pigs do not have sweat glands, they prefer to inhabit moist, well-sheltered areas to hide from the sun and from predators.

How big are feral pigs?

On average, adult males can reach 80-100kg liveweight, with females averaging 50-60kg.

What is the average lifespan of a feral pig?

Very few pigs live more than five years of age, with adult mortality varying from 15 –50% between age cohorts. The mortality of young piglets is generally high, particularly from starvation and loss of contact with their mothers. When food supply and seasonal conditions are favourable, mortality can range from 10 –15%, with mortality being up to 100% when conditions are poor (e.g. drought).

How often do feral pigs breed?

Under favourable conditions, breeding occurs throughout the year. Seasonal breeding can occur when food availability and water is variable. Under favourable conditions, sows will produce two weaned litters every 12-15 months and commence breeding when they reach 25 kg liveweight. Litter sizes can range from 4-10 piglets, with fertility increasing with increasing age. Annually, feral pig populations can increase by up to 86% in ideal conditions.

Are feral pigs dangerous?

Feral pigs can be aggressive. Females can be particularly protective of their young when approached by humans and/or dogs. Feral pigs have large tusks which can cause significant wounds to humans or other animals, if encountered. The greatest danger that feral pigs pose to humans and other livestock are the diseases they carry.

What diseases can feral pigs transmit to other livestock, plants and to humans?

Feral pigs can carry many exotic, endemic and zoonotic diseases as well as parasites that are harmful to animals, humans, and plants. Exotic diseases are those diseases that are not present in Australia and endemic diseases are those that are characteristic of a population, region or environment. A zoonotic disease is defined as a disease that can be transmitted to humans from animals. Some of the key exotic diseases of concern include foot and mouth disease, African swine fever, classical swine fever and Aujeszky's disease. Leptospirosis, brucellosis, melioidosis, erysipelas, sparganosis, Japanese encephalitis, and Q fever are some of the endemic diseases of concern to livestock industries as well as to public health. Feral pigs are implicated in the transmission of Panama disease tropical race 4, a soil-borne fungus that decimates banana plantations and for which there is no treatment. Feral pigs can also transmit *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, which causes dieback in eucalypt forests, native plants and horticultural tree crops. Feral pigs also spread weeds, degrade wetlands and waterholes, cause erosion, and impact on water quality and watering points.

What are their eating habits?

Pigs eat an omnivorous diet - which means they eat a varied diet comprised of vegetation, fruit, grain and animal material. Their diet can vary according to seasonal availabilities. Feral pigs have a preference for succulent green vegetation. The consumption of animal matter varies between seasons and regions, but rarely exceeds 20% of their diet. Feral pigs prey on native species, including earthworms, turtles and their eggs, insects, amphibians, reptiles, ground birds and small mammals.

What are the impacts of feral pigs in Australia?

Feral pigs impact on environmental, agricultural, cultural and social assets across Australia. The Australian agricultural sector bears direct and significant economic costs, due to the predation of newborn livestock, reduced cropping and horticultural yields, degradation of pasture, waterways and soils, transmission of livestock, plant and human diseases, spread of invasive weeds, and damage to infrastructure. Feral pigs threaten biodiversity due to predation, competition for resources, habitat degradation and destruction (including wetlands, fauna habitats, erosion, damage to creek beds, water quality, rooting and wallowing) leading to many native flora and fauna species being listed as threatened from their activity. Feral pigs also cause damage to culturally important sites and contaminate local community water sources.

What are some other sources of information on feral pigs?

Information is provided on the Resources section of our website: <http://feralpigs.com.au/resources/>. The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment's website provides useful information including detail of the *Threat abatement plan for the predation, habitat degradation, competition and disease transmission by feral pigs (2017)*. Websites of state and territory government agencies are also good sources of information.

Who is supporting the development of the National Feral Pig Action Plan (NFPAP)?

In December 2019, the Australian Government provided \$1.4 million over 3.5 years to Australian Pork Limited (APL) for the National Feral Pig Coordinator Program. The implementation of the NFPAP will be supported by investments from all stakeholders working in partnership, ranging from land managers, NRM organisations, conservation management agencies, and all levels of government, to ensure that effective best practice management activities take place on-the-ground to reduce the many impacts created by feral pigs.

Why do we need a National Feral Pig Action Plan (NFPAP)?

The NFPAP will provide a national coordinated framework for use by all stakeholders to reduce the environmental, agricultural, cultural and social impacts caused by feral pigs. It will support consistent, coordinated and collaborative humane best practice feral pig management approaches by land managers. It is expected that the plan will allow for sustained action, investment, capacity and capability of land managers over the long-term. The involvement and support of governments and stakeholders in the development of the plan provides a solid foundation to underpin future investment in feral pig management.

There is a need to:

- Secure sustainable, longer term funding to actively suppress feral pig populations
- Increase government and industry awareness of feral pig issues at the local level and the work being done by community led groups;
- Engage with, and train, landholders to build their capacity and capability of best practice management methods for feral pigs;
- Increase landholder motivation and encourage greater participation in coordinated feral pig control activities
- Create a national database to bring all the data together
- Obtain more consistency in regulations across jurisdictions, including control methods
- Address illegal feral pig hunting activities and their impacts.

Is there a Steering Group and what does it do?

The Steering Group is comprised of a broad range of stakeholders and its role is to direct and inform the development of the National Feral Pig Action Plan (NFPAP). The draft Action Plan is to be delivered to the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment by 15 January 2021.

Who is on the Steering Group and how can I join it?

To find out more about who is on the Steering Group, please refer the Community section of the NFPAP website for member profiles: <http://feralpigs.com.au/community/>. There are many people who would like to contribute to the development of the NFPAP through membership of the Steering Group. We are ensuring that everyone is able to input into Plan's development process - stakeholder forums and extensive consultations are taking place to enable this.

When will the NFPAP be implemented?

The draft plan is to be submitted to the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment. This will then be provided to the Environment and Invasives Committee to obtain recommendation for the NFPAP to be considered by the National Biosecurity Committee for endorsement. This is to be completed by October 2021.

How can I contact the National Feral Pig Action Plan management team?

Send us an email or call one of our team members: <http://feralpigs.com.au/contact/>