

Do you have feral pigs?

Feral pigs cause significant problems for farmers, communities, industry and government agencies alike. In Australia, feral pigs are on the move, invading new areas and expanding their range. Do you know the signs to look out for to recognise if feral pigs are active in your local area? It may surprise you that feral pigs are in your district without you ever seeing them!

What to look for...

1. Digging or Rooting

- This is the most reliable indicator of feral pig presence.
- Feral pigs dig up below-ground foods such as plant roots or tubers, insects, frogs, molluscs and crustaceans.
- Some of these diggings can be up to half a metre deep.
- This rooting behaviour is quite destructive and paddocks often look like they have been ploughed.
- Even small numbers of pigs can dig up large areas of ground in a single night.



Photo supplied by Ethan Willox

2. Pig Hoof Prints

- Hoof prints can be left by feral pigs in soft ground, such as around dams.
- However, other livestock will readily obscure these tracks i.e. when watering in the mornings.
- Pig tracks can be confused with those left by sheep, goats, and deer.



Photo supplied by Dr Peter Adams, DPIRD WA



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3. Feral Pig Scat

- Typically large, pelletised deposits, commonly found along tracks and game paths
- Varies in appearance and consistency due to differences in diet and seasonal availability of foods.
- Knowing what they are eating can help determine suitable feed for use in baiting and /or trapping.



Photo supplied by Dr Peter Adams, DPIRD WA

4. Damage to Crops, Pasture and Wetlands

- Digging by feral pigs can uproot mature plants, disrupt seedlings and facilitate weed establishment.
- Feral pigs also cause significant damage to crops by eating and trampling them.
- Crop damage caused by pigs can sometimes be difficult to distinguish from other pest species.

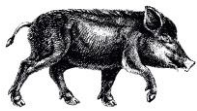


Photo supplied by Central West LLS, NSW



Photo supplied by Dr Ben Allen, USQ

Coordinated, long term actions by land managers, working together, increases the effectiveness of control programs to reduce feral pig populations and their impacts



5. Rub and Tusk Marks

- Rub marks are made by feral pigs, after wallowing, on nearby objects such as tree trunks and fence posts. Feral pigs rub to remove mud, hair and parasites from their bodies.
- Tusk marks are commonly made by boars to indicate their presence to other boars in the area.



Photo supplied by Dr Peter Adams, DPIRD WA

6. Pig Pads or Game Trails

- Pigs often create pads when travelling in single file to access reliable food and water resources.
- Pads can be unreliable if they are also used by other animals or wildlife as they can cover the tracks left by pigs.



8. Wallows

- Feral pigs wallow in moist soil or wet areas to control their body temperature and protect against biting insects.
- Fresh wallows can indicate how recently pigs have been in an area.
- Wallows can persist for long periods of time in the environment.



7. Hair and Mud

- Feral pigs will commonly leave hair and mud on fences when they push through.
- Look for long thick hairs or mud on the bottom wire strands.
- Make sure all fences are regularly inspected and maintained.



9. Livestock Predation

- Predation of lambs and calves by feral pigs can be seasonal, depending on available food resources.
- Feral pigs may consume the whole carcasses, leaving very little visual signs.
- Other scavengers typically make it difficult to determine if feral pigs are the cause of livestock predation.

10. Sighting Live Pigs

- This is the least reliable method of detection.
- During the day pigs are rarely seen as they commonly shelter in thick vegetation and avoid human contact.

More Information:

- PestSmart website: www.pestsmart.com.au and the *Glovebox Guide for managing feral pigs*
- State and territory agriculture department websites on feral pigs