



The innovative Thermal Assisted Aerial Culling (TAAC) method is being used by the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government to reduce the harmful environmental impacts of feral pigs and deer. The program is focussed in the Namadgi National Park, a protected area in southwest ACT, which borders on Kosciusko National Park and covers an area of approximately 1,000 km². The current program, conducted in May 2022, follows two successful aerial control operations in 2021.

Last year's aerial control operation controlled approximately 60 feral pigs in Namadgi National Park. Through 2022's TAAC operations, 272 feral pigs were culled from Namadgi National Park and five other protected areas. Population data is being collected by the aerial shooting team, including location of animals, size of animals and sounder composition. In the park, TAAC has been highly effective in identifying and removing pigs and deer located in difficult-to-access, forest regrowth areas recovering from devastating bushfires in January 2020.

Namadgi National Park is a high conservation value area. The damage caused by feral pigs has been monitored in the Namadgi National Park for

around 40 years and transects are used to measure pig rooting damage to alpine bogs including a Ramsar wetland site, native grasslands and woodlands. Other conservation areas include the wildlife sanctuary at Tidbinbilla, river corridor and urban nature reserves conservation values in which rare and threatened species inhabit.

Despite the relatively low density of feral pigs in the region (as an outcome of consistent control efforts), these assets are at risk due to wallowing and rooting behaviours of feral pigs impacting on soil disturbance and vegetative cover.

This program is being used to plan subsequent on-ground control programs, including trapping and baiting, and provides a good example of how combinations of best practice management methods are being effectively applied. Baiting is the primary method used throughout the year, with trapping also used to remove pigs in response to local damage or detection of a population. The success of this program is also attributed to the support of both urban and rural landowners in the region.

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Left: Feral pigs detected in thermal imaging
Right: Booroomba Rocks.
Photo supplied by ACT Government

