



CLCAC & WILSSED RANGER PROGRAM

Feral Animal Aerial Control Program



Why do we cull feral animals?

Feral animals cause large impacts to the cultural and environmental values of our country, especially pigs, horses, cats and cane toads and a small number of water buffalo.

Horses and feral pigs especially degrade natural ecosystems through soil compaction and soil erosion. They can cause significant damage in riparian areas and other waterways, and can damage cultural sites. They also compete with native animals and livestock for grazing.

Feral animals also pose considerable biosecurity threats through the spread of zoonotic diseases. Cats are a major contributor to the depletion of small mammal, vertebrates and bird populations across Australia.

The trampling and reduction and loss of groundcover caused by pigs and horses can reduce fuel loads important for burning. Pigs damage turtle nests causing a reduction in hatch success.

Pest management in the region needs to be undertaken over large areas. Established in 2010, the aerial feral animal control program is conducted on active pastoral lease and exclusive Native Title country. It is funded through State and Federal Government investment, and fee for service work through the Department of Agriculture and pastoral companies.

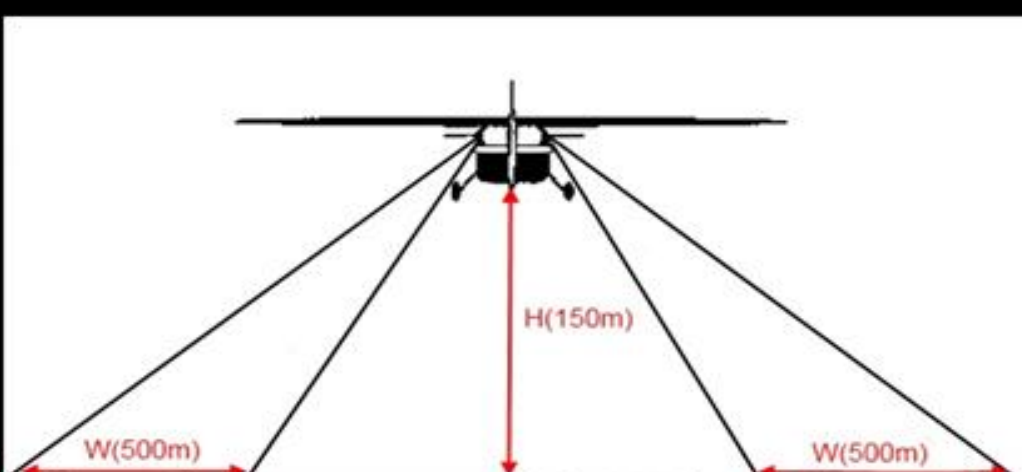
The Rangers are now responsible for the on-ground planning and delivery of all feral animal operations in the region.

Aerial Survey Methodologies

Fixed wing aircraft surveys are undertaken prior to culling to determine the distribution and abundance of pest species.

Detailed feral animal distribution maps are developed for the project area to identify high priority areas.

Project logistics such as fuel, shoot time, ammunition and the requirements of camping are all planned.



Aerial culls are then undertaken by helicopter (R22 for pigs and R44 for horses) using a Belgian FN-SCAR 17 7.62x51 rifle with 130g (for pigs) or 150g (for horses) hollow point bullets.

It is a policy requirement to have communications inflight for scheduled call-ins across the whole of the project area.

Data collected includes number and location of feral animals culled per culling period.



Training & Licensing Requirements

Several Rangers have undertaken firearms training which includes:

- AHCPMG311 – Use firearms for pest control activities from aircraft
- AHCVPT203A – Use firearms to humanely destroy animals
- Firearms handling & maintenance
- Helicopter procedures
- Safety management brief
- Delivery of culling and survey operations

Strict licensing requirements are required to ensure legislative compliance including:

- Queensland Firearms License Category A, B & D
- Aviation Reference Number (ARN)
- Permission to Carry and Discharge Firearms from Aircraft (CASA approved)



Achievements

Since establishment in 2010 more than 93,000 pigs and 17,000 horses have been culled as part of this program, achieving significant environmental outcomes including:

- Reduction in the spread of Weeds of National Significance
- enhancement of fire programs due to increased fuel loads
- protection of marine turtles and improved condition of wetlands

Significant economic gains include the increased productivity for pastoral enterprises and fee for service opportunities. The program has also improved cultural values by protecting country, improving hunting and gathering of traditional foods and recovery of freshwater resources, and has established long-term regional partnerships with pastoralists and Government agencies.

