



# Feral pig management in the Namadgi National Park, ACT



The alpine forest of Namadgi National Park is home to threatened and or at-risk fauna species including the Northern corroboree frog (*Pseudophryne pengilleyi*), Bogong moth (*Agrotis infusa*) and mountain pygmy-possum (*Burrhamys parvus*). Many native fauna utilise the sphagnum moss bogs and wetland areas that feral pigs destroy from their rooting and wallowing behaviours. The impacts from feral pigs on threatened species and ecosystems in the National Park, and increasingly in peri-urban areas of Canberra, emphasises the need for consistent, proactive and strategic control to maintain low feral pig numbers and minimise their dispersal into suburbia.

The Australian Capital Territory is largely comprised of National Park, river corridors, some grazing properties, and a growing urban area, interspersed with small valuable nature reserves. The waterways in the Namadgi National Park and other conservation areas in the region provide good corridors for wildlife and pest species, including feral pigs and deer. Increasing housing developments on the urban fringe close to public land reserves is resulting in growing pressure of possible incursions of vertebrate pests in these areas.



*River junctions providing shelter and movement corridors for wildlife and invasive feral animals*

Mark Sweaney and Richard Barnsley from the ACT Parks and Conservation Service met with Dr. Narelle Dybing in early December 2022 and visited known and emerging areas affected by feral pigs in Canberra's surrounding suburbs, and around Namadgi National Park and Murrumbidgee River Corridor.

The ACT Park and Conservation Service conducts thermal assisted aerial culling (TAAC) on an annual basis. This method is being used due to difficulties in accessing areas being impacted by feral pigs and deer due to the thick canopy and understorey, as well as mountainous terrain. TAAC also enables larger areas of the landscape to be covered.

Baiting and trapping are used by ACT Park and Conservation Service to support the aerial control program to remove remaining animals. This proactive baiting program is one of the longest running annual feral pig baiting programs in Australia. Wheat bait is placed along fire trails and field cameras are used to determine the number of pigs feeding and quantity of poison to be used. Baiting is also conducted along river corridors, in nature reserves and in urban areas.

In 2021 & 2022, HOGGONE baits were trialled. Some difficulty was experienced in tempting feral pigs to visit bait stations and consume these baits due to the abundant availability of feed in the National Park as a result of high rainfall and favourable climatic conditions. This method will be included as a regular feral pig management tool. The ACT Government support private land managers to control feral pig populations on private land through the supply of feral pig traps as well as issuing of 1080 bait to those land managers who hold required accreditations.

With the contrasting landscapes and assets being impacted by feral pigs, the control of feral pig populations and their impacts through the strategic and long-term use of different combinations of best practice management methods was evident. No recent damage by feral pigs to those wetlands visited was observed.



*From left: Richard Barnsley and Mark Sweaney (ACT Parks and Conservation Service) in a wetland with no recent observable damage by feral pigs*

The National Feral Pig Action Plan wishes to extend our thanks to Mark and Richard for their time to discuss ACT Parks and Conservation's management program and demonstrate the on-ground improvements being achieved.

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