

Feral pig control in the Scott Coastal Plain informed by effective monitoring



Lower Blackwood LCDC and Lower Blackwood Vertebrate Pest Management Group (LBVPMG), in southwest WA, are working together on a three-year Feral Pig Focus project in the Scott Coastal Plain. The project was funded by the WA State Natural Resource Management Program and has been running for 18 months,

The Scott Coastal Plain lies in the southwest corner of WA and is a unique environment surrounded by farmland, industry, National Parks and suburban housing. It is also a culturally significant place for the Wa(r)dandi-Pibelmen people with the Blackwood River system (including the Scott River) being a registered Aboriginal heritage site.

The Scott Coastal Plain is home to:

- 10 species of threatened flora
- 52 species of priority flora
- the Scott River Ironstone Threatened Ecological Community
- 26 fauna species listed as threatened, priority or under protection.

Feral pigs pose a large and increasing threat to the biodiversity and cultural values of the region as well as to significant agricultural assets.

Some of these impacts include:

- Habitat destruction in wetlands used by the endangered Australasian bittern
- Predation of the vulnerable Carter's freshwater mussel (*Westralunio carteri*)
- Destruction of the peat system by rooting, increasing risk of fire and decreasing carbon sequestration
- Damage to the Indigenous Kibra carvings.

Monitoring transects have been set up for this project to survey for signs of feral pigs. Field cameras have been installed along these transects to monitor feral pig activity

and estimate feral pig population density. This information will be used to focus management efforts.

This project is reliant on the collaboration and good relationships between landholders, plantation companies, state agencies and local government to undertake feral pig control, record pig sightings and damage information and identify additional hot-spot areas for the field officers to focus their work.

Across the project area, the LBVPMG are conducting consistent feral pig trapping over 6-month blocks. HOGGONE feral pig bait is also being trialled.

Despite the constant management efforts being undertaken by the LBVPMG and Lower Blackwood LCDC during these 6-month trapping blocks, there is evidence of recent significant feral pig dig damage to paddocks and native vegetation, feral pig trails under fencing, rubbing marks on trees that thin tree trunks which can eventually cause tree death, as well as evidence of predation of the Carter's freshwater mussel along the edge of the river.

This demonstrates the importance of ongoing and proactive feral pig control measures by all landholders. This is needed to keep damage to a minimum so that the Scott Coastal Plain is protected from feral pigs and to prevent incursions of feral pigs into the precious Scott National Park.

For more information:

Visit the website:

<https://lowerblackwood.com.au/projects/feral-pig-control/>

Or contact:

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From left: Feral pig tracks under fencing; Rooting damage under native vegetation; Feral pig pad/trail next to a tree with significant rubbing; Feral pig digs next to the road; The thick vegetation encountered during control activities in this region