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REDUCING RESIDUAL AGRICULTURAL LOSSES FROM FERAL PIGS

Photo credit: Primary Industries and Regions South Australia

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**NATIONAL
FERAL PIG**
ACTION PLAN

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Significant opportunities remain to reduce residual agricultural losses and impacts on natural assets caused by feral pigs to improve productivity and profitability of agricultural businesses and deliver flow-on benefits to regional communities. This report outlines recommended actions to reduce feral pig impacts on agricultural production in Australia, including opportunities to strengthen engagement and networks, priority capacity-building activities (by industry and location), and the support and tools needed by land managers to sustain long-term, effective management.

Feral pigs are an intelligent, mobile, resilient and adaptable invasive species and inhabit up to 45% of Australia's land mass. Australia's grain, horticultural, cotton, livestock and sugar industries, together with the infrastructure associated with these enterprises, are significantly impacted by feral pigs. In 2023, annual costs to Australian agriculture were conservatively estimated at \$156 million. Feral pigs destroy land, crops, pastures and water sources, cause erosion and contaminate water through their rooting, digging, trampling and wallowing behaviours. They also threaten biosecurity through the transmission of pathogens and parasites of significance to livestock, plants, wildlife and humans, spread weeds and prey on livestock. As potential vectors of disease, feral pigs are considered to be the invasive species of highest concern.

This project, funded by the Australian Government, examined opportunities to reduce residual agricultural losses caused by feral pigs and inform further actions that could be taken under the National Feral Pig Action Plan to support agricultural landholders to more effectively manage feral pigs to increase agricultural productivity.

Stakeholder engagement and analysis was undertaken to understand what's currently being done and what's needed to better support land managers to reduce negative impacts. A total of 74 stakeholders, including primary producers, state and local jurisdictions, natural resource management agencies, regional biosecurity associations, rural research and development corporations, industry groups, service providers/contractors and farming organisations provided their responses to a semi-structured questionnaire between August and October 2025. Industries involved were sugarcane, macadamias, almonds, melons, citrus, bananas, fruit and vegetables, cotton, grain, pork, wool, sheep meat, goats, feedlot cattle and grassfed cattle.

During these interviews, participants were asked to provide information (where known/available) on key locations impacted by pigs, economic losses being incurred, current and future actions needed to support growers and key organisations that are providing reliable and trusted advice to reduce agricultural losses caused by feral pigs.

Feral pigs are continuing to cause extensive impacts to a broad range of agricultural industries and producers (as well as to the environment, cultural and social assets). Overall, coordinated and collective management action is inconsistent, primarily short term and lacking in many areas. Significant opportunities to reduce residual agricultural losses caused by feral pigs by land managers working closely together in coordinated ways were identified. For this to occur, land managers require understanding of costs incurred to their business as well as benefits that may flow from their involvement, enhanced skills and knowledge to determine which control method(s) to use, how and when. Shared vision and effective relationships with neighbours, both farmers and public land managers, was considered essential to both initiate and maintain coordinated activity at a local scale. However, many respondents expressed their frustration that land managers in their region did not conduct control programs or applied method(s) that were ineffective in removing whole groups of feral pigs. Insufficient resourcing of local programs was viewed as a major impediment to feral pig control by land managers, with many also demotivated by insufficient actions (perceived or otherwise) by governments in the management of public land. It is acknowledged that more consistent and long-term investment, including investment from stakeholders who are experiencing losses, is required to support on-ground programs and to strategically fill the many gaps identified from this study.

Key drivers influencing land managers to undertake feral pig management include economic losses to agricultural production (crops, livestock, and infrastructure), environmental degradation of ecosystems, high biosecurity risks involving disease transmission, and legislative obligations. However, these motivators were found to vary between different land managers.

Strengthen biosecurity and regulatory policy

Importantly, many stakeholders considered that biosecurity and regulatory policy must be strong and clearly define the obligations of all land managers to improve compliance by land managers with controlling vertebrate pests and to optimise the effectiveness of efforts to remove feral pig populations at a landscape scale. Lack of awareness of legislative requirements by absentee and peri-urban landholders was raised as an important issue.

In some states, such as South Australia, strong legislation is enabling better compliance by land managers to control vertebrate pest species. Improved compliance by land managers would also assist with reducing harbourage areas available for feral pigs and increase areas under coordinated management at a regional scale. Opportunities to prepare case studies from these examples should be explored. It was recommended that state and territory governments review their biosecurity legislation and supporting policies to strengthen compliance and enforcement mechanisms and clearly define obligations of all land managers to effectively control feral pigs.

Driving control action by improved knowledge of losses to farming enterprises

Stakeholders were aware of the importance of data collection to demonstrate impacts / losses, engage land managers and improve decision making. It was also considered that improved understanding of agricultural losses being experienced by individual land managers for different agricultural enterprises would help motivate their participation in local management programs. While some economic estimates of feral pig damage are available, they are often anecdotal, generated by land managers at an individual farm level, and rarely aggregated to determine impacts by commodity or region. The challenges with quantifying the costs of the damage that feral pigs cause to agriculture, especially at large spatial and temporal scales, is why this remains an outstanding issue.

Some programs and organisations are now working to enhance data collection; however, standardised assessment methods are not yet available. The work program of the National Feral Pig Action Plan (November 2025 to October 2027) includes the development of standardised assessment methods to better quantify the impacts of feral pigs. A report is also underway, commissioned by the National Feral Pig Action Plan, to extend the understanding of the impacts of feral pigs for a range of commodities. It is recommended that economic estimates of feral pig damage for the following commodities outside this work are developed, for horticultural crops such as citrus, tree nut crops and fruit and vegetables, specific grains and pulses and beef cattle to help motivate action by these enterprises.

To support required behaviour changes of land managers, the economic damage estimates caused by feral pigs to different agricultural commodities need to be translated into case studies and communicated by trusted partners to target landholders. This could assist with engaging those land managers who currently do not participate in community-led feral pig management groups due to a lack of knowledge of how they may be being impacted or do not appreciate the size of the problem in their area. Many land managers also undervalue, or do not recognise, the economic losses caused by feral pigs to their businesses, such as where feral pigs may pose unseen/unknown disease risks to livestock.

Economic impact data on the 'cost of feral pigs to our agricultural industries' are also essential for demonstrating the size and extent of feral pig impacts to local, state and federal governments to obtain ongoing support for coordination roles, local programs and to promote benefits from being involved in community-led management programs to land managers.

Supporting sustained involvement of land managers in coordinated groups

The most successful management outcomes are achieved when groups of land managers (both public and private) are locally facilitated by a coordinator. Some of these have been promoted by the National Feral Pig Action Plan through its various communication channels. However, this study identified that low involvement of land managers in coordinated feral pig management is a widespread issue and is not confined to specific regions or to an agricultural sector.

There is no single model for resourcing local coordinators. In some areas, coordination of community-led group(s) is part of the role of a state or local government biosecurity officer, a natural resource management project officer or industry engagement officer (which are often reliant on project funding); in others, it is a voluntary role filled by a local land manager or community leader. Identifying 'local champions' to lead local groups and/or work with the local coordinators to encourage local people to participate in and sustain management efforts is key.

At the local level, land managers need to work together to apply control methods at the right places, scale, time and frequency for their efforts to be effective. Many industry bodies were unable to provide information on the extent of feral pig impacts to producers in key growing regions. This study identified many heavily impacted areas where improved local intelligence, supported by planned collaborative efforts, could substantially reduce agricultural losses experienced by land managers. This emphasises the need for both robust local data as well as recruitment of local land manager champions to encourage all land managers in an area to participate in management groups.

Managing feral pigs is complex due to the mix of land tenures and agricultural land uses, even at a local scale. Whilst it is possible to work solely with those producers involved in particular heavily-affected agricultural sectors, neighbouring land managers who use their land differently should also be involved, due to the mobility of feral pigs in the landscape.

Ensuring adequate resourcing of coordinators to work at the local level to address challenges with attracting and maintaining involvement of all land managers in local management groups was recommended from this study. These 'people' challenges include:

- a reluctance of some land managers to join and/or remain involved in local management groups.
- competing priorities.
- do not consider that feral pig populations on their property is a critical enough problem to justify their time and investment.
- lack of reliable data on populations present and/or impacts can lead to scepticism of the group's purpose and need.
- preferred timing(s) of management effort by the group conflicts with property operational demands.
- distrust between landholders, and variation in impact by landholders who differ in how they are using their land.
- preference to rely on existing methods for control, including access for hunters whose services are often free for the land manager.
- differences in how feral pigs are perceived compared with others – may be viewed as a resource or source of income (e.g. harvesting, hunting activities) which can result in disagreement in how they are managed.
- dissatisfaction with feral pig management actions by public land managers.
- disagreement of control methods to be used, when and locations in the local area where management effort is to be targeted.

It is recommended that groups be established in areas where feral pigs are causing high residual agricultural losses and there is low collaboration between local land managers. This work would then create models / blueprints on how to establish coordinated management groups and provide information to others on how to bring land managers together; how to prepare local/regional management plans and how to implement them. There are many regions where this work could occur – including northern NSW, southeast, central and far north Queensland (with some actions already underway by these jurisdictions). Existing management groups could be involved, such as those being coordinated by state agencies (e.g. Local Land Services), local government and/or NRM organisations, to draw on experiences of land managers who are participating in locally coordinated and collaborative feral pig management programs. There are examples where groups are working effectively together, for example in NSW and WA, which are detailed in this report.

Understanding whether actions are making a difference through technology

It can be difficult for land managers to ascertain whether management efforts achieve desired objectives, even if population or impact reduction targets are being set. Increasingly, technology such as thermal drones and camera traps are cost-effective methods being used to identify the presence of feral pigs in the landscape, monitoring changes in feral pig populations and/or impacts and inform management strategies. In some areas, thermal assisted aerial culling has been successfully applied to remove evasive individuals from the landscape.

Thermal technology is being increasingly used, particularly by vertebrate pest contractors, to identify locations of feral pigs to target on-ground control efforts. This knowledge is then provided to land managers but may not be further shared. Guidance materials to support land managers with the use of these tools are needed and will be delivered as part of the National Feral Pig Action Plan's current work program.

It is recommended that community-led groups be supported in the use of technology on a landscape scale basis, optimise management approaches so that they are more strategic, targeted and measurable, and enhance land manager involvement. This could then be scaled up to include other priority regions.

Incentives to motivate action

Many respondents expressed concern about costs associated with feral pig management, including costs of free feed required for baiting and trapping. This can constrain on-ground efforts due to the extent of inputs required and lead to them becoming ineffective.

NSW Local Land Services' 2025-26 Feral Pig and Pest Project, where free grain and 1080 treated grain is being made available to land managers for coordinated baiting and trapping programs, is demonstrating that small incentives to make the job a bit easier can make a difference. This model also provides the opportunity to engage with groups of landholders on the most effective on-ground management and monitoring approaches in their area. Similar success has been achieved in South Australia with free rabbit baits. It is recommended that jurisdictions (and other organisations who are leading programs involving feral pig management) consider these types of strategies to support landholders in meeting their biosecurity obligations and reducing costs/losses incurred. Such activities can be accompanied by workshops and field demonstrations to build capacity and capability of land managers in applying management methods according to best practice.

Increasing collaboration across public and private land managers

A clear need to strengthen relationships and trust between neighbouring private and public land managers was raised by many respondents across Australia. Frustration with ineffective/no feral pig management being undertaken on public lands was expressed (real or perceived), as this can provide an ongoing source of feral pig infestations onto private land.

Wherever possible, it is recommended that public agencies engage more fully in cross-tenure management groups, provide details of proposed activities and communicate outcomes. This information could then be used by other group members to align their activities with those of the public land manager. Communication issues could also be improved if public agencies are aware of a central local point of contact (e.g. a group facilitator) and/or through using reporting tools (such as FeralScan) to share information with group members.

Some of the programs currently being supported by state government-funded Good Neighbour Programs (e.g. in NSW, Victoria, WA and QLD) are useful case studies for promotion through the National Feral Pig Action Plan on how to better engage public and private land managers to work more collaboratively at a landscape scale. Opportunities for these programs to remain ongoing should be explored.

Enhance engagement, capacity and capability of land managers

The extensive consultations with industry and land managers demonstrated that feral pigs are impacting a broad range of agricultural industries in many regions across Australia. It was clear that the capacity and capability of land managers to confidently and strategically apply all available feral pig management methods needs to be strengthened. Further, land managers also require support to build skills and knowledge in how to use new and existing monitoring tools to inform management decisions and evaluate outcomes.

Whilst NSW Local Land Services conduct workshops for land managers across NSW, capacity and capability development training in other states and territories is not as widely available. To address this gap, it is recommended that state and territory pest representatives and Research and Development Corporations (RDC) aligned with affected industries collaborate to co-invest in tailored training and development activities for their land managers as part of their industry extension and adoption programs. These RDC's include Grains Research and Development Corporation, Cotton Research and Development Corporation, Hort Innovation, Sugar Research Australia, Australian Wool Innovation, Australian Pork Limited and Meat and Livestock Australia.

Close engagement with industry will assist with ensuring consistent messaging, visibility of information and agreement on appropriate timing of activities to optimise land manager participation. For this to be actionable, more detailed information on impacts caused by feral pigs to productivity and profitability is required for this issue to be elevated as a priority against a plethora of other industry challenges.

It was recommended that a collaborative extension concept be built in collaboration with key affected industries and appropriate jurisdictional partners to support land managers in heavily affected regions, such as in northwest NSW, south east, central and far north QLD e.g. i) cropping, ii) cropping/livestock, iii) sugarcane/ horticulture/livestock and iv) horticulture/livestock enterprises.

Expected outcomes from these extension activities would be that land managers have more confidence in applying required skills and knowledge to effectively apply best practice management methods, know who they can approach for assistance as well as become more familiar with how to plan and monitor their control programs.

Opportunities to extend engagement and networks

Few stakeholders identified alternative sources of technical expertise in addition to jurisdictions, natural resource management organisations, recognised biosecurity groups and local vertebrate pest contractors. This highlights opportunities to build awareness of others who are directly supporting land managers in their business operations (e.g agronomists, rural suppliers) and work with these groups to enhance skills and knowledge of integrated best practice management of feral pigs. This initiative may be driven by the National Feral Pig Action Plan as an engagement activity, with support from jurisdictions, NRM organisations and state farming organisations.

Overall, this study generated good engagement with agricultural industries impacted by feral pigs. Those industries engaged in this study were: Australian Banana Growers Council, Australian Lot Feeders Association, Australian Macadamia Society, Australian Pork Limited, Canegrowers, Cattle Australia, Citrus Australia, Cotton Australia, Grain Growers, Melons Australia, Northern Territory Cattleman's Association, Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Growers and Sheep Producers Australia. All of these representatives expressed concern about feral pig impacts to their respective industries.

Ongoing engagement with the peak industry bodies by the National Feral Pig Action Plan will be progressed to increase awareness of land managers of resources and other materials that are available (including those of the National Feral Pig Action Plan), strengthen relationships and connect them with other management groups and sources of technical expertise they may need to support them with addressing feral pig challenges.

1

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

Feral pigs are defined as un-owned pigs that live in the wild and are descended from domesticated pigs of the species *Sus scrofa*, family Suidae. As feral pigs are an established pest in Australia, an asset protection approach is applied by states and territories for their management. Feral pigs are also a declared pest in all states and territories, hence it is the responsibility of all land managers (including state and territory governments, local government and private landholders) to ensure that they comply with legislative requirements to manage populations of feral pigs and minimise biosecurity risks that pest animals present.



Photo credit: Tony Lockrey, AMPS Agribusiness, Moree

Feral pig management is complex as it involves adaptive management strategies that take their ecology and behaviour into account and human dimensions, that can be influenced by environmental, social and economic pressures. It is recognised that at least 70% of a feral pig population needs to be removed annually to prevent rapid population recovery, preferably from across a large geographic area (Gentle and Pople 2013). This, combined with their high reproductive rate, with sows reaching sexual maturity at 6 months of age and able to have two litters of 4-10 pigs every 12-15 months under favourable seasonal conditions, makes their effective control difficult. Therefore, much of the challenge in effectively reducing feral pig populations is related to people, and influencing behaviour and practice change. These include (but are not limited to):

- Influencing land managers to work together with others to reduce the pig population and keep consistent pressure on the population (even as numbers decline);
- Moving away from ineffective control tools (such as shooting) rather than best practice baiting and trapping to remove whole populations of feral pigs;
- Adoption rates of new ideas, technologies, methodologies and control methods;
- Time, labour, costs, equipment and/or other resources required to manage feral pigs;
- Understanding of feral pig movements in the landscape and population dynamics in response to habitat conditions and food abundance;
- Adoption of monitoring, in addition to control activities;
- Increasing knowledge of how to cost-effectively design, plan, conduct, monitor and evaluate the impact of control activities;
- Resources available from external agencies (local government, NRM or state agencies) to support control activities.

The [National Feral Pig Action Plan 2021-2031](#) (the Plan), endorsed by the National Biosecurity Committee in October 2021, aims to reduce the impacts of feral pigs on Australia's environment, agriculture, cultural, and social assets through coordinated, collaborative and sustained actions by land managers, with the goal of minimising threats and risks by 2031. The Plan intentionally sets a long-term, ambitious vision to implement solutions to address this long-term problem. It aims to encourage coordinated landscape-scale approaches for feral pig management using combinations of all best practice techniques to control populations thereby limiting pig's capacity to reproduce and reduce their many impacts. Wherever practicable, local community groups involving all land managers (both private and public) working together are advocated.

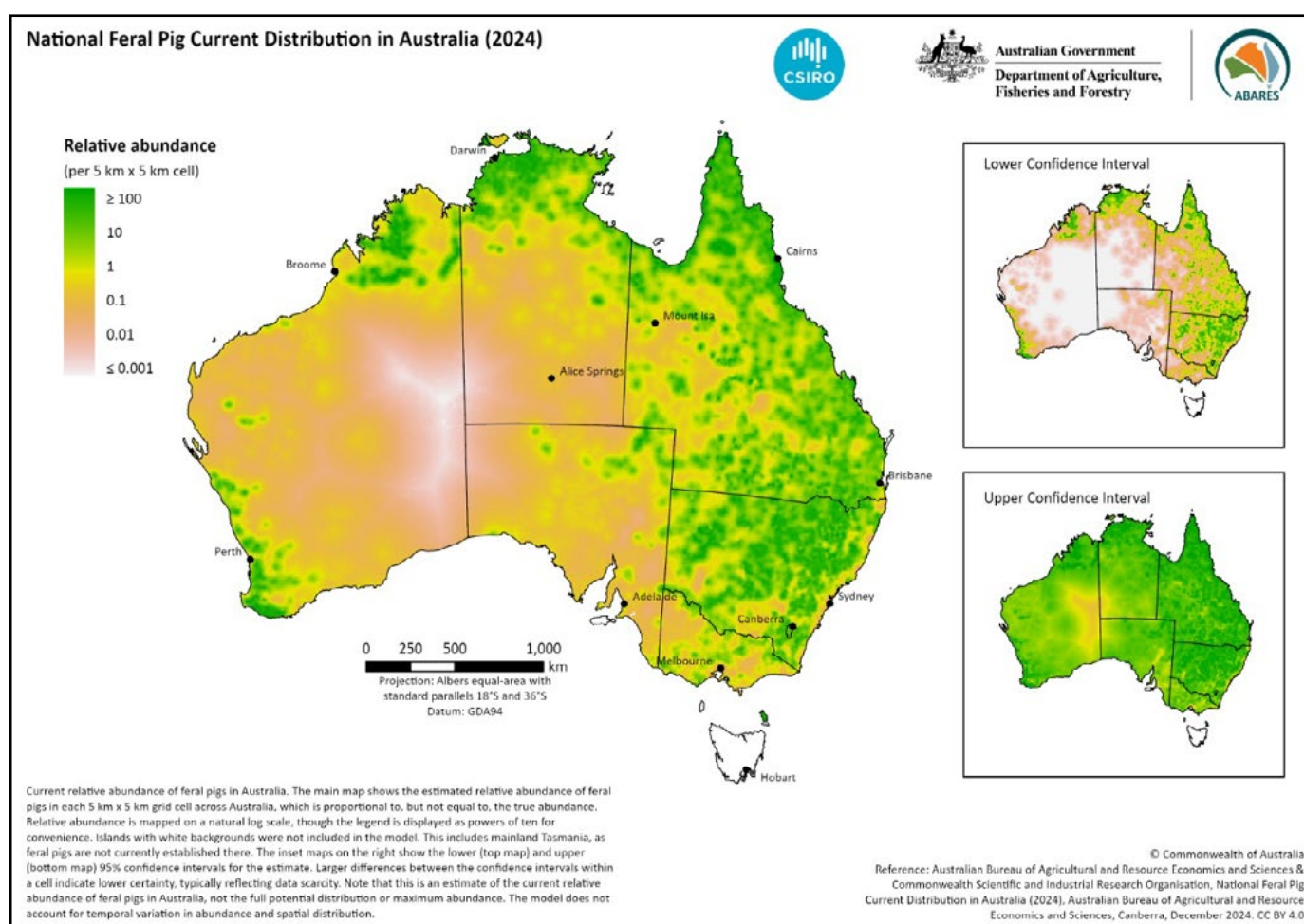
Feral pigs pose significant risks to Australia's unique environment, our \$90 billion agricultural sector, biosecurity, cultural heritage and values. They are one of Australia's most destructive invasive species and inhabit up to 45% of Australia's land mass. Groups of feral pigs move across the landscape within defined home ranges, with this movement varying with season and availability and access to water, shelter and food. In Australia, feral pigs can live in diverse habitats that have reliable water sources, including wetlands, swamps, floodplains, watercourses, tropical rainforests, sub-alpine grasslands, open woodlands, shrubby heathlands and open and semi-arid rangelands.

1.1 FERAL PIG DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE IN AUSTRALIA

The National Feral Pig Current Distribution in Australia (Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) and Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), 2024) provides a broad-scale, national map of the current distribution and relative abundance of feral pigs for each 5 km x 5 km cell in the raster grid (Figure 1). This map illustrates that feral pigs inhabit all states and territories, except mainland Tasmania. Feral pigs are more widely distributed in Queensland, New South Wales and Northern Territory. Populations of feral pigs are distributed across many regions in Victoria. In Western Australia, feral pigs are primarily found in the northern agricultural region extending from Geraldton, Northampton, Arrowsmith to Morawa, in the southwest and in river systems in the north Kimberley.

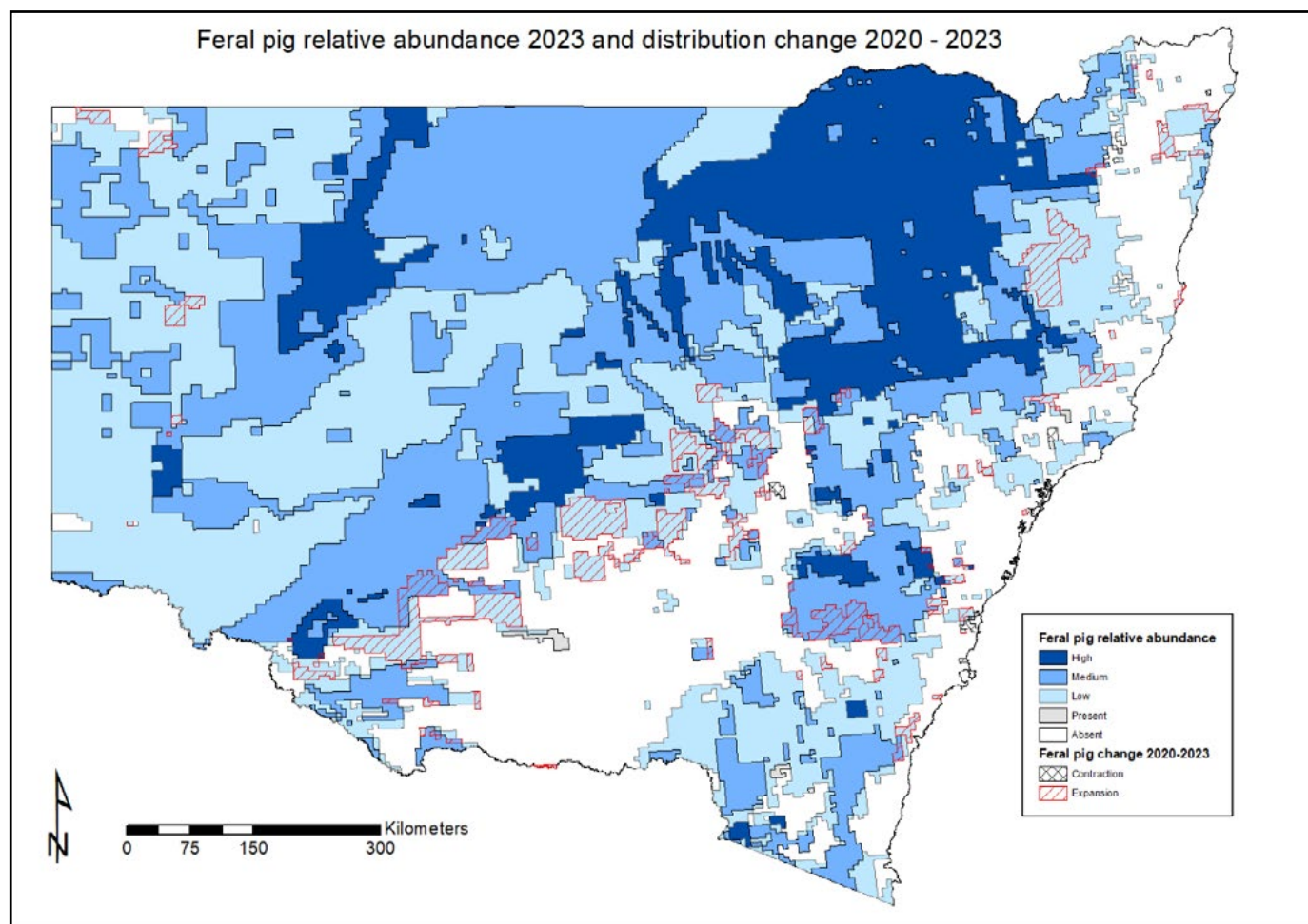
The change in relative abundance of feral pigs has been subjectively assessed by the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD). Increases in relative abundance and distribution were found in many areas across NSW between 2020 and 2023, largely due to consecutive good seasonal conditions during this period resulting in plentiful water, food and shelter (Figure 2). Comparable maps from other states and territories have not been published.

Figure 1: National Feral Pig Current Distribution in Australia (2024)



Source: Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences and Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (2024)

Figure 2: Feral pig relative abundance in 2023 and distribution change 2020-2023 in NSW (DPIRD NSW)



Feral pig populations during the 2000's were estimated at 3.2 million (95% confidence interval: 2.4 million to 4.0 million), at an average density of 1.03 pigs km² (Hone 2021). Actual national population sizes are unknown.

In response to favourable seasonal conditions in many regions across Australia over the past five years, it is likely that populations are much higher than this estimate. Knowledge of feral pig abundance at a local / regional level is very limited, is dependent on information collected by land managers through monitoring and surveillance activities and is typically not shared outside of the locality.

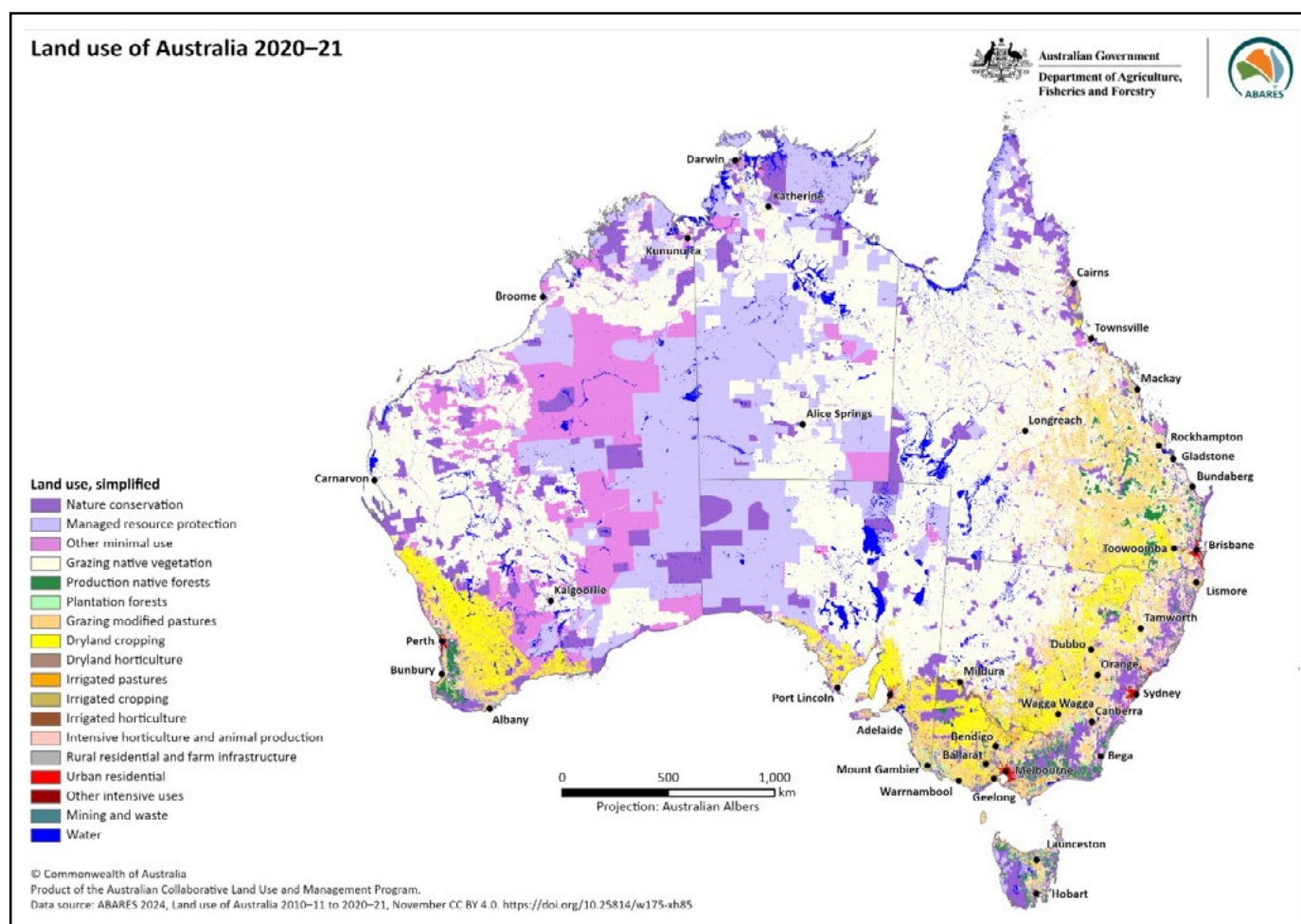
Increased reports by land managers of feral pig damage to both agricultural and environmental assets may be an indication of growing feral pig densities, however, there is a lack of information on the relationship between feral pig density and damage (Bengsen et al. 2017). Management efforts are also thwarted by low local/regional knowledge of population density and spatial and temporal movement in different habitats and geographical areas inhabited by feral pigs.

Australia's grain, horticulture, cotton, livestock and sugar industries, together with the infrastructure associated with these enterprises, can be significantly impacted by feral pigs. The locations of these industries can be seen in Figure 3.

Feral pigs destroy land, crops, pastures and water sources, cause erosion and contaminate water through their rooting, digging, trampling and wallowing behaviours. They also threaten biosecurity through the transmission of pathogens and parasites of significance to livestock, plants, wildlife and humans, spread weeds and prey on livestock. Choquenot et al. (1996) noted that as potential vectors of disease, feral pigs are the invasive species of highest concern.

Maps overlaying feral pig densities with most agricultural industries are not available other than the Australian Animal Disease Spread model (AADIS) African Swine Fever (ASF) and foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) epidemiological models that includes commercial pork and beef cattle production sites (Bradhurst et al., 2022; 2025).

Figure 3: Land use of Australia 2020-21



1.2 AGGREGATED DATA AVAILABLE ON ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF FERAL PIGS

In 2023, the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) estimated that feral pigs cost farmers around \$156 million annually, in terms of agricultural losses and costs of managing feral pig populations (Hafi et al. 2023). Of this, \$110 million was spent annually by land managers on control. Estimated losses at an industry level were: \$36 million to the cropping sector (bananas, barley, chickpeas, cotton, maize, oats, sorghum, sugarcane and wheat), \$6 million to the sheep meat sector and \$5 million to the wool industry. These residual losses were estimated based on the value of agricultural production of affected industries in an average year over five years to 2021. These analyses utilised data obtained from landholder responses to the 2019 Pest Animals and Weeds Survey that involved 7,751 land managers (Stenekes and Kancans 2021).

In 2022, 77% of land managers indicated that they undertook feral animal management activities, with 19% indicating that they spent time or money managing feral pigs (Stenekes et al. 2023). The percentage of landholders assumed to experience residual impacts by feral pigs on a state and industry level is shown in Table 1. It is apparent that feral pigs were shown to be more problematic in Queensland (across all industries investigated) and New South Wales, particularly for cotton growers. Overall, costs to control feral pigs by agricultural land managers in NSW and QLD was estimated to be \$34 million and \$70 million, respectively. Residual agricultural losses were estimated to be \$17 million and \$25 million in NSW and QLD, respectively (Hafi et al. 2023).

These estimates of residual losses were generated by applying a set of best estimate assumptions about crop yield losses, reductions in livestock carrying capacity, control costs, and the proportion of crop and livestock production affected in different regions. Low-end, most likely and high-end estimates were constructed by considering uncertainty in information available. This means that, for feral pigs, residual agricultural losses from feral pigs were estimated to range from \$18 million to \$75 million per year (average of \$46 million per year).

These residual losses refer to the economic damage that remains after active control measures (such as baiting, trapping, and shooting) have been conducted. This represents the gap between potential revenue and actual revenue due to persistent damage by pigs that were not removed, as well as the costs of maintaining, but not completely eliminating, feral pig populations. It also suggests that the significant investment and effort that is being applied by land managers to reduce feral pig impacts may not be as effective as it needs to be. Only 22% of land managers involved in the 2022 ABARES Pest Animal and Weeds Survey (Stenekes et al. 2023) reported that feral pig management was very or moderately effective. As impacts continue, alternative approaches in how best practice management techniques are being applied are needed to protect assets from feral pigs, improve knockdown rates and achieve desired population reduction targets of >70% (Bengsen et al. 2014).

Table 1: Percentage of landholders that suffered residual impacts from feral pigs on a state and industry basis (Hafi et al. 2023)

Industry	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
Beef	6.39	5.47	17.82	0	0.13	0.85	0.63
Sheep meat	7.75	0	23.11	0	0	0.28	3.57
Wool	7.75	0	23.11	0	0	0.28	3.57
Grain	7.78	0	27.86	0	0	0.41	1.67
Cotton	45.14	NA	22.3	NA	NA	NA	NA
Sugar cane	0	NA	31.96	0	NA	NA	NA

Importantly, in 2022, it was estimated that \$44 million in agricultural losses was avoided due to the implementation of feral pig management that cost \$30 million. It is likely that the avoided losses to agriculture due to feral pigs would have been higher as damage to private infrastructure, impacts on soil erosion and disease transmission was not accounted for (Hafi et al. 2023).

Estimates for production losses caused by feral pigs used by Hafi et al. (2023) were drawn from five studies conducted from 1982 to 2015 (Slatyer et al. 2023). More recent data is limited and is largely confined to studies commissioned by North West Local Land Services (Powell and Revell 2021, 2023, 2025), Whitsunday Regional Council (Synergies Economic Consulting 2020) and Lockrey (2025). None of these studies have been formally published. Details of these studies are presented in the Results section of this report.

1.3 PROJECTS UNDERWAY TO ADDRESS DATA GAPS

The National Feral Pig Action Plan is currently co-investing in a project led by Landcare Research New Zealand, in collaboration with NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), WA DPIRD and Department of Primary Industries QLD, to:

- provide a current assessment of the agricultural impacts and costs of feral pigs in Australia, utilising ABARES data from the Pest Animal and Weeds Survey (2016, 2019, 2022).
- pilot methods that land managers could use to capture relevant data from currently used technologies to better quantify agricultural impacts and costs to their businesses.
- propose pathways for robust measurement of return on investment from feral pig management activities.

It is expected that the findings from this review will increase understanding of costs of damage caused, and risks posed, by feral pigs to a range of agricultural industries for which data is available, specifically grain, wool, sheep meat, cotton, sugarcane and banana industries. It could provide the opportunity to stimulate investment in industry-led initiatives to increase land manager capacity and capability in applying best practice management methods to more effectively control with feral pig populations and assist with motivating land managers to work more closely together in coordinated community-led programs. As part of this project, the use of drone and satellite imagery was explored in northwest NSW, in collaboration with AMPS Agribusiness, as potential methods to identify and delineate damage patches and quantify crop damage caused by feral pigs.

Other current initiatives to obtain data on economic losses at a regional or industry level are:

- NSW Local Land Services Pest Animal Impacts Monitoring Landholder Survey.
 - 600+ NSW landholder responses over the past three years.
 - Includes a question on percentage estimated damage or loss by asset / agricultural commodity.
- Feral pig impact calculator – NW LLS NSW (used locally but not publicly available).

1.4 COORDINATED MANAGEMENT OF FERAL PIGS

As feral pigs are opportunistic omnivores and are mobile in their environment, they can source a variety of different food in the environment to meet their nutritional requirements throughout the year. Coordinated and collaborative management approaches on a cross-tenure basis is regarded as the way forward to more effectively control populations and reduce impacts from feral pigs. These principles are supported by all states and territories. Wherever possible, case studies of coordinated feral pig management programs are extended to stakeholders via the National Feral Pig Action Plan's communication activities.

In 2024-25, NSW Local Land Services staff coordinated 90 feral pig programs across the state, involving 4793 properties and covering 11.7 million hectares. Ongoing engagement by LLS staff with landholders in the Megalong Valley has seen very high participation rates in long term coordinated trapping and aerial shooting programs. In WA, Recognised Biosecurity Groups work closely with land managers to coordinate area-wide feral pig management programs. Across regions covered by the Central Wheatbelt Biosecurity Association and Midlands Biosecurity Group, 4,372 feral pigs were removed by aerial culling over 207.5 hours of flying time. From January to June 2025, a combined effort of Northern Biosecurity Group ground and aerial culling removed a further 11,500 feral pigs across the region. These data do not include feral pigs removed by landholder control efforts. These aerial control outcomes were achieved following the adoption of a zonal approach that allowed the team to spend more time in each zone to remove all pigs encountered rather than targeting presumed hotspots. This work is also supported by on-ground coordinated management, supported by Licenced Pest Management Technicians (LPMTs).

The Queensland Department of Primary Industries have developed the Queensland Feral Pig Management Action Plan 2026-2031. This plan aims to protect Queensland's natural environment, agricultural and cultural assets by reducing feral pig populations using coordinated approaches and regional action plans tailored to Queensland's diverse bioregions. At a local government level, the Whitsunday Regional Council have coordinated their feral pig program across 14 feral animal management areas since 2014. This has enabled large areas of the shire to be covered under coordinated management, with collaborations also extending into neighbouring shires. This program, together with the VVA program, are two of the National Feral Pig Action Plan's demonstration sites (case studies) providing strong examples of successful coordinated and collaborative feral pig management programs.

1.5 IMPACT MONITORING CHALLENGES

Feral pig management and monitoring is challenging and time consuming. Consistent and robust methodology to capture reliable and robust estimates of productivity losses due to feral pigs, such as during different crop stages, disease impacts or livestock predation, does not exist. Few land managers routinely and consistently record damage caused by feral pigs. Their financial impacts are largely anecdotal, broadly estimated and any data collected is typically not shared with others or

It is noteworthy that coordinated, landscape-scale management of feral pigs is starting from a relatively low base. The 2022 ABARES Pest Animals and Weeds Survey found that 9.7% of land managers were members of at least one pest or weed management group (Stenekes et al. 2023). Many of these groups are supported by local government, Landcare groups and regional NRM/Catchment Management Authority/ Local Land Services agencies.

The adoption of coordinated and collaborative management by land managers for feral pigs requires tailored engagement, trust building, support from local champions and timely feedback to landholders. Effective communication between different stakeholders is needed to support landholders with continuing their activities. Strengthened relationships and communication between private and public land managers at a local/regional level are key to reducing local feral pig populations through coordination of management activities and knowledge sharing. Engaging with absentee landholders in an area to become involved in coordinated programs, or at least allow access to land to undertake control activities, is essential to ensure they comply with legislative requirements as well as reduce harbourage areas available to feral pigs. The effort required to achieve this cannot be understated – it requires additional resourcing, relationship building and expertise in community engagement.

The complexities and management challenges associated with feral pig population control, from both a feral pig and human perspective, illustrates why this invasive species is continuing to create havoc in agricultural production systems, as well as to Australia's environmental, cultural and social assets. This long-term problem, requires consistent effort and commitment combined with long term solutions for agricultural losses to be reduced and for the vision of the National Feral Pig Action Plan 2021-2031 to be delivered.

stored centrally. There are many reasons for this. It is often very difficult to discriminate between agricultural damage caused by feral pigs with that caused by other invasive animals, wildlife, such as kangaroos and emus, waterlogging or diseases. This is further complicated by feral pigs impacting different agricultural businesses differently, season to season variation and sporadic/indiscriminate impacts.



Photo credit: NSW Local Land Services

2

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

This project aimed to detail how to reduce residual agricultural losses caused by feral pigs in Australia including:

- Desktop analysis to summarise impacts by industry and state (including what industries/locations present the greatest opportunity to reduce residual agricultural losses).
- Engage with stakeholders (jurisdiction agencies, industry bodies, landscape boards/local land services, researchers, landholders) to identify what is currently being done to support these landholders and what gaps (priority actions) are needed to improve management.
- Identify potential partners who are already connected to landholders (and where landholders source their advice) and the role they could play in improving management of feral pigs to reduce residual agricultural losses.

Whilst feral pigs cause extensive impacts to Australia's environmental assets, threatened species and areas of national significance (Threat Abatement Plan 2017; Threatened Species Action Plan 2022-2032), this was not investigated as part of this study due to its focus on agricultural losses caused by feral pigs.



Photo credit: Tony Lockrey, AMPS Agribusiness, Moree

3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



Photo credit: NSW Local Land Services

3.1 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The project involved wide consultation with all key agricultural stakeholder groups dealing with, or being directly impacted by, feral pigs. This was done to ensure that our engagement activities were as wide and thorough as possible to enable all viewpoints to be captured. Relationships built over the last five years by the National Feral Pig Management Coordinator were drawn upon to compile a representative list of stakeholders. This included priority stakeholders, covering:

- Primary producers
- Peak industry bodies of major affected agricultural industries
- State and national farming peak bodies.
- Rural Research and Development Corporations
- State and local governments
- Biosecurity associations
- Service providers
- Vertebrate pest contractors
- Natural Resource Management (NRM) organisations, and
- Research/technical representatives.

Industries that contributed to the project were: sugarcane, macadamias, almonds, melons, citrus, bananas, fruit and vegetables, cotton, grain, pork, wool, sheepmeat, goats, and feedlot and grassfed cattle. The stakeholder consultation list also included representatives from the National Feral Pig Action Plan's Implementation Committee (IC) and Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) members, as well as the Terrestrial Vertebrate Working Group. The NFPAP's Implementation Committee were provided an overview and updates at their meetings in August and November 2025. The list of stakeholders involved in this study is provided in Appendix 7.1.

A project flyer (Appendix 7.2) was developed to assist in raising awareness about the project and provide background information to stakeholders. The project was also communicated through the National Feral Pig Action Plan's monthly newsletters, which also invited individual land holders to contribute.

Key contacts assisted the project team to reach subgroups, individual producers and appropriate representatives, for example individual horticulture commodity peak bodies and landholder committee members. The National Farmers Federation (NFF) disseminated information through the NFF Horticulture Council, that comprises 19 national commodity and state-based horticulture bodies. Several industry contacts included the flyer and project information in their industry newsletters. This culminated in a number of individual landholders contacting the project team to provide their feedback.

3.2 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Identified stakeholders were contacted and invited to participate in individual semi-structured interviews, conducted either online or by telephone.

Three tailored questionnaires (i. state and local government/ NRM/research; ii. agricultural industry representatives and iii. primary producers) were used for each interview to cover the key areas of inquiry and meet the objectives of this project. The survey questionnaires are provided in Appendix 7.3.

Interviews were conducted between August and October 2025. A total of 74 interviews were conducted. Overall, stakeholders were positively engaged, with valuable and informative insights obtained, as they were pleased that the issue of agricultural losses from feral pigs was being considered. Each interview lasted for 45-60 minutes.

From a stakeholder engagement perspective, this project has broadened our networks with other affected industries, connected us with new contacts (particularly in the horticulture sector), provided opportunities to follow-up with further information and increased awareness across the agriculture sector of resources available to support land managers (including the NFPAP website resources and the National Feral Pig Management Coordinator role).

3.3 ONLINE WORKSHOP

A two hour online facilitated workshop was held on 27th October 2025 with 26 key representatives to validate stakeholder insights, identify key themes and prioritise project recommendations.

Prior to the workshop, a summary of project findings that detailed what was currently being done, barriers and priority actions for improving feral pig management was shared with participants to inform workshop discussions.

Participants were divided into six groups comprised of different stakeholder types, and worked through three key activities to consider findings and provide advice on recommendations. The facilitated workshop activity questions were:

1. Reflection and validation - which findings resonate most strongly with your experience? Were there any surprises? Are there gaps or other factors important to you that didn't come through strongly in the findings?
2. Exploring insights for the future - what do these findings mean for the future of feral pig management? What new insights emerge when we put the pieces together? What risks or opportunities should we be alert to?
3. From Insights to Recommendations - Given what we've found and what we've discussed, what recommendations should we make?

Representatives at the workshop also included the Chair and members of the NFPAP Implementation Committee and the co-chair of the Terrestrial Vertebrate Working Group. The organisations involved in the workshop are provided in Appendix 7.4.

3.4 ANALYSIS

Individual responses from each interview were captured in writing and then entered into an Excel spreadsheet to assist with qualitative analysis. Additional information, data, report references and images of feral pig damage were also provided by contacts.

Information was compiled by question topic and analysed by question/key topic area as well as key stakeholder types. Analysis was also supplemented by key supporting references including peer-reviewed papers, reports, articles and information that participants had highlighted or shared.

Outcomes from the stakeholder online workshop were used to focus the preparation of the draft report, provide clarity on pertinent findings and future directions and enable stakeholders to highlight any gaps.



Photo credit: NSW Local Land Services

4

RESULTS

Information was captured from respondents on feral pig impacts on an agricultural industry and state basis. Detail on current damage and economic losses being experienced by each industry that participated in the survey and the extent to which feral pigs are a priority for industry are presented in Section 4.1.



Photo credit: NSW Local Land Services

Before detailing this information, we reiterate the key existing national or regional estimates of economic impact to agriculture from feral pigs:

- Across Australia, 16% of landholders reported spending time and/or money on feral pig management in the year 2022 (average expenditure of \$3,758 per property), with this percentage increasing relative to the two previous years of the survey (2016: 15% (\$2,041 per property) and 2019: 13% (\$2,834 per property)) (Stenekes et al. 2023).
- For those land managers conducting effective feral pig management, it was estimated that \$44 million in agricultural losses was avoided due to the implementation of feral pig management that cost \$30 million. (this does not include damage to private infrastructure, soil erosion and disease introduction) (Hafi et al. 2023).
- In addition to expenditure on management, landholders incurred estimated yearly residual losses to production of \$55.1M, \$42.7M, and \$36.2M in 2016, 2019 and 2022, respectively (in 2021/22 Australian dollars; estimated assuming medium impacts of pigs and following the methods of Hafi et al. 2023) (Latham et al. 2026).

Across regional north west NSW, it was estimated that feral pigs cost \$62 million in lost agricultural production across twelve of the highest value agricultural commodities in 2022/23 (Powell and Revell 2024), compared with \$47 million in 2020/21 (Powell and Revell 2021) and \$56 million in 2021/22 (Powell and Revell 2023) (Table 1).

Table 2 presents estimates of yield reductions caused by feral pigs, total cost of damage and the amount of money spent by producers in north west NSW to control them.

Table 1: Economic losses and anticipated damage from feral pigs and estimated regional losses for 2021/22 to 2022/23 (Powell and Revell 2023; Powell and Revell 2024)

Enterprise	Economic loss from feral pigs (\$/ha)		Anticipated damage by feral pigs (% of yield)		Estimated regional loss (\$ million)	
	2021/22	2022/23	2021/22	2022/23	2021/22	2022/23
Barley for grain	24	35	2.3	3.25	6.32	5.65
Canola	32	23	1.53	1.53	1.42	2.45
Chickpeas	28	23	2.86	2.92	5.63	2.14
Cotton lint (irrigated)	61	50	0.69	0.63	9.32	7.78
Cotton lint (dryland)	28	12	0.69	0.63	3.48	1.76
Faba beans	22	33	2.17	3.42	8.84	1.31
Grain in temporary storage	13	4		2.09	6.99	2.51
Hay	29	19	5.45	3.4	0.43	0.25
Maize for grain	61	79	1.8	1.65	0.18	0.74
Oats	10	12	2.62	2.62	0.29	0.36
Sorghum for grain	36	55	3.34	3.44	5.21	10.41
Wheat for grain	9	17	0.92	1.3	9.56	16.84
Sheep and lambs			7.7	12	6.21	10.16
Regional Total					\$55.92 m	\$62.35 m

Table 2: Percentage yield reductions, cost of damage and feral pig management costs to seven crop types grown across 17,000 ha in north west NSW (Lockrey 2025).

	Mung beans	Sorghum	Chickpea	Wheat	Canola	Barley	Faba bean
Area (ha)	2500	4040	6040	2850	1480	650	340
% Yield reduction	2.50%	4.00%	0.50%	0.50%	5.00%	4.00%	7.00%
Total Cost (\$)	\$66,250	\$238,360	\$62,665	\$20,663	\$145,040	\$29,484	\$29,512
Spent Protecting (\$)	\$12,181	\$38,247	\$10,038	\$10,551	\$4,969	\$3,892	\$4,366



Photo credit: Lawrence di Bella

4.1 IMPACTS BY INDUSTRY AND STATE

This section presents the information gathered through the project as well as from available reports on current damage and economic losses being experienced by each industry that participated in the survey.

4.1.1 Horticulture

Analysis of the ABARES-PAWS survey (Latham et al. 2026) found that 38%, 32%, and 27% of fruit and tree nut growing landholders in the Wet Tropics, Burnett Mary, and South East Queensland, respectively, reported that they have major feral pig problems.

Of those landholders with farms producing fruit and tree nuts that reported major problems with feral pigs in 2022, 80% reported damage to crops and between 51–60% reported damage to infrastructure, erosion caused by pigs, and the introduction and spread of seeds of weed species. Contamination of water sources (23%) and risk of feral pigs spreading diseases (37%) were also reported by landholders (although these percentages could incorporate the impacts of other pest species, such as rats, which could not be separated from those of feral pigs).

Feral pigs, rats, and mice were the most important vertebrate pests impacting fruit and nut growers, with 33% of growers reporting problems with feral pigs, rats, and/or mice in 2022 (Latham et al. 2026).

4.1.1.1 Almonds

Industry size, location, value	As at June 2024, the Australian almond industry produced 153,500 tonnes of almonds valued at \$870 million. About 80% of production was exported, at a value of \$762 million. 2023-24 production by region: • VIC: Sunraysia - 34,899ha (52.8% of plantings), 68,953 tonnes (45% of production). • NSW: Riverina - 16,060ha (24.3% of plantings), 37,686 tonnes (25% of production). • SA: Riverland and Adelaide Plains - 13,469ha and 710 ha (20.4% and 1.1% of plantings), respectively. Production: 46,076 tonnes (30% of production). • WA: Swan - 822ha (1.2% of plantings), 784 tonnes (0.5% of production). Source: <i>Almonds Australia, Hort Innovation</i>
Reported feral pig impact – location, damage, cost	Damage: • Uprooting and damaging young plants. • Damage to irrigation infrastructure. • Creating wet patches/water lanes in orchards leading to operational and soil issues, especially in areas with clay soils. This can also lead to fungal problems. Some properties may not have systems in place to check pressure changes / issues with irrigation systems until the water leaks are visibly seen. • Some trees may also not be watered, causing them to die / reduce productivity. • Contamination of almond nuts on the ground due to presence of faeces, raising food safety concerns (e.g. <i>Salmonella</i>, <i>E. coli</i>). • Exclusion fencing in many areas have deteriorated, enabling open access to almond orchards. In key production areas, replacement fencing can cost ~\$25,000/km due to sandy soil types. Cost: • Unknown, issue managed at the individual farm level. Source: <i>Stakeholder interviews</i>
Are feral pigs a priority for industry?	Substantial infrastructure damage caused by feral pigs to almond orchards. As almonds are harvested from the ground, feral pigs can compromise food safety due to faecal contamination with <i>Salmonella</i>. Decontamination treatment lowers product quality and value. Bird, animal and vermin management is part of quality assurance programs and biosecurity is included as a module in Almond Hort360. Growers are managing feral pig issues locally, and generally not participating in local management groups. In Victoria, Agriculture Victoria and Parks Victoria are engaging with the almond sector to establish collaborative and coordinated programs involving public and private land managers in the Hattah region (project supported by DAFF).

4.1.1.2 Bananas

Industry size, location, value	For the year ending 30 June 2024, a total of 13,551 ha was planted to bananas in Australia, with Queensland accounting for 94% of production (346,611 tonnes). The two varieties grown in Australia are the Cavendish (97% of fresh production; 357,673 tonnes) and Lady Finger (3% of production; 11,062 tonnes). Banana production was valued at \$697.8 million in 2023/24. The major growing regions are the Cassowary Coast (Tully, Innisfail and Kennedy), the Atherton Tablelands and Lakeland, north of Cairns. Other tropical production areas are in the Northern Territory and Kununurra, Western Australia. <i>Source: Hort Innovation, Australian Banana Growers Council</i>
Reported feral pig impact – location, damage, cost	Damage: • Feral pigs damage banana crops by eating ripe and unripe fruit, destroying banana plants, fencing, and farm infrastructure through trampling, • Pose a severe biosecurity risk by spreading soil-borne diseases including <i>Fusarium oxysporum</i> f.sp. <i>cubense</i> (Panama Disease Tropical Race 4). • Bananas are a Restricted Matter under legislation so growers in the Tully region, where outbreaks of Panama Disease TR4 have been detected, must be sure that controls are happening on those infested properties. • Most damage caused by feral pigs is to fencing, rather than trees. • With TR4, full exclusion fencing is required in restricted areas as part of the Australian Banana Industry Code of Practice. Pigs repeatedly damage fences resulting in high and ongoing maintenance costs to repair fences and protect farms from feral pig incursions. Cost: • No estimates available. • Mitchell and Dorney (2002) estimated that yield losses caused by feral pigs to banana growers was 0.001 to 0.2%. • In the Mareeba district, it has been reported that pigs can remove up to 100 banana suckers per night and may on occasion push adult trees over to eat fruit. <i>Source: Australian Banana Growers Council</i>
Are feral pigs a priority for industry?	Feral pigs are a major priority for industry. The Australian Banana Growers Council (ABGC) works actively with banana growers, other agricultural producers, state and local governments to reduce risks of TR4 spread by feral pigs. Whilst economic losses to the Australian banana industry due to feral pigs has not been quantified at a regional or industry level, the combination of crop loss, infrastructure damage and the cost of control efforts are significant banana growers. Since 2017, almost 8000 pigs have been removed (aerial control -3331 pigs; ground control – 4450 pigs) from the Tully Valley through the industry-led control program to mitigate risks of TR4 transmission in the region. Aerial and on-ground management of feral pigs remains an ongoing activity. Communications materials have been developed to support ABGC's feral pig monitoring and management initiatives across North Queensland. Work is also progressing on options available to explore technical capability in thermal drone surveying as part of their surveillance strategy.

4.1.1.3 Citrus

Industry size,
location, value

The Australian citrus industry had a production value year ending June 2024 of 883,627t, worth \$1,115 million. The citrus industry supplies the domestic, export and processing industries and is one of Australia's largest fresh produce exporters (to over 50 overseas markets). Total export volumes of over 280,000 tonnes were reached in 2024, with a value of over \$590 million.

The industry is one of Australia's largest horticulture industries with commercial production in five states and one territory (QLD, NSW, VIC, SA, WA, NT). In 2023 there were 31,226ha planted (834 business/trading names), with the main growing regions being South Australia's Riverland, the Murray Valley region of New South Wales and Victoria, the Riverina region of New South Wales and the Central Burnett region of Queensland. Citrus are also grown in Western Australia, coastal New South Wales, northern and central Queensland and the Northern Territory.

- NSW Riverina 8739 ha (28%).
- NSW Murray Valley 7011 ha (22%) as well as northern NSW.
- QLD (Central Burnett) 6777ha (22%) as well as FNQ and Emerald.
- SA Riverland 5620ha (18%).
- WA 771ha (3%) traditional growing regions include Carnarvon, Gingin, Bindoon, Chittering, Perth Hills and Harvey. Substantial orchards have been established in Moora and Dandaragan.
- NT (Katherine, Darwin).

Crop type (as percentage of national hectares):

- Oranges 61%.
- Mandarin and tangelo 29%.
- Lemon and lime 9%.
- Grapefruit and pummelo 1%.

Citrus Australia is the peak industry body representing the nation's commercial citrus growers.

Source: Citrus Australia, Hort Innovation.

Reported feral
pig impact
– location,
damage, cost

Prompted by this project, Citrus Australia undertook a survey of their members to better understand the prevalence of feral pig impacts across the industry. The organisation was already aware that feral pigs were causing problems for some of their growers. Survey results (n=25 respondents, and in order of greatest proportion of respondents, from QLD at 48% of respondents, NSW, VIC, SA, WA):

Damage:

- 44% of respondents indicated feral pigs significantly impacted their citrus farm in the past 12 months. The remaining 48% indicated they had experienced moderate or slight impacts.
- Key damage reported:
 - >95% experienced soil disturbance/erosion (which also makes it dangerous and difficult to operate machinery in between rows).
 - 75% damage to irrigation systems.
 - 62.5% damage to young trees or branches.
 - 58% loss of fruit (eating fallen or low-hanging citrus).
 - 50% spread of weeds.
 - 12.5% water contamination from wallowing.
 - As well as ripping and removal of trees in first three years and fence damage.

Cost:

- Estimate of cost from feral pigs to farm each year (repairs, fruit loss, labour, etc.) - 21% estimated costs of >\$50,000, 29% between \$20,000-50,000 and another 29% of \$5,000-\$20,000. Costs incurred to install exclusion fencing - \$10,000-\$15,000/km.

Control methods employed by growers (noting 12% reported no control measures at present):

- 80% shooting (on farm or coordinated).
- 72% trapping.
- 40% fencing.
- 20% baiting.
- 20% other (contract aerial shooting, pig hunters with dogs).

4.1.1.3 Citrus

Are feral pigs a priority for industry?

- Feral pigs are an issue for some growers and this is reported from time to time at state and regional level meetings.
- Not resourced as an organisation to drive projects specifically on feral pigs.
- Interested in understanding the problem and being able to refer growers to credible information and providers.
- Growers typically communicate on such issues between each other in a localised growing region, may engage technical support from outside.
- Citrus growers come together informally to chat about traps, bait, or coordinated informal network, drawing on and working with local knowledge and are open to bringing in an outside technical person or contractor for pest control.

This presents **opportunities to work more closely with Citrus Australia and Hort Innovation to support feral pig workshops for producers in heavily-impacted areas (e.g. FNQ, Bundaberg region)**. These workshops would aim to build capacity and capability to apply control techniques that are more effective at removing whole groups, increase knowledge of feral pig ecology, movement and behaviour and encourage collaborative and coordinated management. With growers located in different regions across Australia, options to produce 'how to' videos and supporting resources, tailored for the citrus industry, could be explored.

Citrus Australia stated that they are willing to communicate correct, trusted information, raise awareness of programs and provide connection to other programs.

4.1.1.4 Fruit and vegetables (Queensland)

Industry size, location, value	The Australian vegetable industry is valued at \$5,701 million as at June 2024, with 3.8 million tonnes produced. Feral pig management in Queensland horticulture is a widespread, complex issue with significant economic and environmental impacts. Feral pigs are causing significant damage to fruit and vegetable growers across Queensland, particularly in regions like the Wet Tropics, Mareeba, Bundaberg, and the Tablelands. Industry groups are aware of the issue but there is a lack of targeted support for horticulture (as opposed to other agricultural sectors e.g. cane, bananas).
Reported feral pig impact – location, damage, cost	Damage: Damage includes water contamination, destruction of crops, damage to irrigation pipes, soil erosion, and threats to biodiversity. Risks of disease spread and food safety concerns. Cost: • There is little quantitative data on the cost of damage or the effectiveness of control measures. Most information is anecdotal. • There is a need for systematic data collection on damage and control outcomes, possibly starting with key crops and regions as well as more coordinated action, and tailored support for horticultural growers. • Synergies (2020) reported economic cost and lost production due to feral pigs on seven horticultural crops in the Whitsunday region. An average yield loss of 1% (valued at \$4.044 million based on a total planted area of 12,800 ha) was reported across mangoes, melons, capsicums, pumpkins, corn, beans and tomatoes. • Horticultural growers have reported annual vegetable crop losses of \$2.5-3 million. • Pineapples – a grower reported \$75,000 to \$200,000 in damage (80,000 plants a season on an individual property). • Pumpkins – an example of a loss of up to 25% profitability (Mareeba region).
Are feral pigs a priority for industry?	Feral pigs are a growing priority for the fruit and vegetable sector. There is a strong sense of frustration due to the lack of coordinated support and effective, scalable solutions. Most efforts are local and not coordinated at an industry or regional level. Growers are utilising various control methods: trapping, shooting (preferred for being more humane), fencing (effective but costly at \$10,000-12,000/km), and emerging use of technology (thermal scopes, drones, cameras). <i>Develop a feral pig management module for Hort 360, the business management and risk planning program for fruit and vegetable growers, and work with Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Growers (QFVG) to build stronger cross industry collaborations.</i> The development of a voluntary module will require funding, such as through Hort Innovation – discussions are continuing with QFVG.

4.1.1.5 Macadamias

Industry size,
location, value

Australia is the world's major producer of macadamia nuts, with this crop being the nation's fourth largest horticultural export. As at June 30 2024, 53,590 tonnes of macadamias, valued at \$202 million, were produced by more than 700 growers.

A total of 45,388 ha is planted to macadamia orchards, with the main production areas extending from northern New South Wales to Dimbolah in Far North Queensland.

Source: *Macadamia Society of Australia, Hort Innovation*

Reported feral
pig impact
– location,
damage, cost

Location:

- Bundaberg (Queensland): Large, flat orchards, often corporate-run, have invested in exclusion fencing and aerial shooting. Orchards bordering avocados, sugarcane, or national parks are particularly vulnerable.
- Gympie (Queensland): Smaller, sloped orchards face persistent problems, with control efforts hindered by social issues and lack of funding. Grower alliances exist but struggle for resources.
- Sunshine Coast (Queensland): Pig issues persist, though less severe than Bundaberg and Gympie.
- Northern Rivers and Clarence Valley (New South Wales): Inland farms, especially those adjacent to state forests, experience notable damage. Coastal orchards are less affected.
- Other notable areas: Wallowville, Baka, Avondale, Elliott (Bundaberg); Maroro, Gurranang, Woodford, Palmer's Island (NSW), and areas inland from the Nambucca region.

Damage:

- Crop loss: Macadamias are harvested from the ground so it is difficult to understand production losses from nuts consumed by feral pigs. Damage is often underestimated due to unseen losses.
 - Bright, Gains and Kaddatz (2020) advised that up to six kilograms of nuts in shell per hour may be consumed by a moderate size pig. Pigs of 90–100 kg can consume 3% of its body weight per day; smaller pigs up to 5% of body weight. Ten pigs feeding in an orchard for ten days can destroy nearly 300 kilograms of nuts in shell. The current nut in shell (NIS) price is \$4.22/kg – in one night, a pig can consume \$25 of nuts. With 15 pigs in the orchard, this may equate to \$375 per night. The season goes from March to September (approximately 230 days) and for approximately 60 days, there will be enough nuts on the ground for the pigs to take their fill of 2 kg, thus a loss of \$22,500 from 15 pigs.
- Orchard floor damage: Rooting and trampling disturb the orchard floor, undermining harvestability and increasing costs for repair.
- Biosecurity threats: Pigs act as vectors for diseases such as phytophthora, posing risks to tree health, as well as faecal contamination of ground harvested nuts.
- Infrastructure loss: Electric and exclusion fencing is often required but is extremely expensive (up to \$10,000 per kilometre). Pigs have been seen to breach robust fencing if not properly electrified.
- Irrigation and compost: Pigs bite irrigation lines and are attracted to compost spread under trees due to the smell and presence of invertebrates, compounding floor damage especially in wetter seasons.

Current activity:

Effective feral pig management relies on the collaboration of multiple stakeholders.

- Australian Macadamias and related organizations provide information, run field days, and facilitate grower networks. Their role is primarily educational and supportive.
- Local groups coordinate area-wide management and share intelligence, but their activities are often informal and under-resourced.
- Some councils actively fund control programs, while others provide minimal support or lack clarity in responsibility.
- Professionals in the region offer advanced services (drone monitoring, night shooting), but a standardized register of qualified providers is lacking.
- In NSW, LLS offers resources and infrastructure for pig control, though availability varies by region.
- WhatsApp groups and informal networks are the primary means of coordination at the grower level, with limited uptake of formal tracking tools like FeralScan.

4.1.1.5 Macadamias

Reported feral pig impact – location, damage, cost

Management actions

- Aerial shooting: Predominant in Bundaberg, conducted professional, highly effective but costly and requires coordination.
- Exclusion fencing: Corporate orchards have invested in electrified seven-strand fences, especially along forest borders. While effective, the initial and maintenance costs are prohibitive for many growers.
- Baiting and trapping: More common in Gympie and NSW regions. Professional trappers use drones for monitoring and mapping pig populations. Trapping is viewed by growers as most effective for population reduction, but is labour-intensive.
- Community-led initiatives: Grower alliances and WhatsApp groups facilitate information sharing and coordination of control efforts, though participation and funding are inconsistent. FeralScan is not used by growers to record or share data.
- Council and agency programs: Some local councils (e.g., Gympie) fund monitoring and shooting. Local Land Services (LLS) in NSW provide traps, bait stations, and occasional free baiting days, but coverage is uneven.
- While professional approaches yield better results, several challenges are undermining of effectiveness of control efforts by growers:
 - “Cowboy shooters” disrupt professional trapping, reducing overall impact by only targeting individual animals rather than entire groups.
 - Many programs are project-based and lack sustained support, causing momentum to dissipate once grants end.
 - Growers struggle to navigate regulations around bait use and access to public lands for control activities.
 - Public perception around shooting and baiting has become more contentious, especially as rural communities diversify and urban residents move in.

Are feral pigs a priority for industry?

Feral pigs are a priority for industry.

Data is not available on total cost of feral pigs to the industry.

- Damage is often unseen, making it difficult to quantify losses and advocate for resources. Only about 10% of macadamia farms report pigs as a major problem, possibly underreporting the true extent.
- A broad range of control activities are being undertaken by growers in different regions.

Actions:

- **Work with Australian Macadamia Society to identify several coordinated groups in QLD and/or NSW and communicate approaches being taken with growers in other areas. This could also include the development of a suite of extension resources.**
- **Quantify economic impacts of feral pigs to macadamia industry.**

4.1.1.6 Melons

Industry size, location, value	The Australian melon industry is divided into two categories: watermelons and muskmelons (rockmelons 85%, honeydews 14%, Piel de Sapo 1%). Both melon categories are impacted by feral pigs. Watermelons: for the year ending June 30 2024, 199,531 tonnes of watermelons were produced, valued at \$184.1 m. The major production areas are Chinchilla, Bundaberg and Bowen (QLD; 32% of production), Cowra and Riverina (NSW; 26% of production), Darwin and Katherine (NT; 25% of production), Kununurra (WA; 14% of production), and Sunraysia (VIC; 2% of production). Muskmelons: Production occurs year round, with the major production areas being Darwin, Bowen, Bundaberg, Cowra, Riverina, Sunraysia, Riverland and South Perth. Queensland accounts for 38% of production, NSW 32.0%, WA 14.0% and NT 11.0%. In 2023/24, 62,776 tonnes of muskmelons were produced, with 10,998 tonnes exported. <i>Source: Hort Innovation</i>
Reported feral pig impact – location, damage, cost	Damage: - Physical damage to drainage systems and soil erosion, activity in drains to feed on invertebrates is causing them to get wider. - Food safety concerns for watermelons (<i>Salmonella</i>, <i>E. coli</i>) – Melons are harvested from the ground. If feral pigs have been present, melons cannot be washed to manage food safety risks from faecal contamination there are no postharvest processes (e.g. washing and sanitising) used to reduce microbial food safety for watermelons. Reducing microbial food safety risks in watermelon production starts preharvest. Management of wildlife and animal activity is incorporated into best practice guides and industry quality assurance programs to assess and manage food safety risks. - Individual growers are therefore unable to justify \$2.5 million required to build and run a packing plant for melons. - Washing reduces shelf life by 4-5 days, normally 10 days paddock to plate. - Most food safety risks with melons come from washing / packing plants. - Cost of melons would double if washing was used. - Biosecurity concerns - weeds, pests, disease spread. Concern about spread of soil borne diseases e.g. studies have shown traces of Fusarium wilt found on noses of feral pigs. - Mental health issues – ongoing pressure due to threats to production, year round control programs required. Costs: - No industry level information available on economic losses caused by feral pigs to the Australian melon industry or costs spent by growers on their control. - Individual grower feedback demonstrates impacts to melon growers. For example, a mob of 40 pigs comes in 2-3 times per year and destroys 0.5 ha in one night, costing ~\$1.5 m in lost production annually (65t/ha @\$1.50/kg). - Another grower estimated damage costs of \$30,000 in 2024/25, with an additional \$20,000 in costs of control (including erection of electric fencing). - Exclusion fencing, especially on leased land, is difficult but growers may need to do this to mitigate food safety risks to melons from feral pigs. Costs of \$12,000/km, using Australian posts and fencing materials). Exclusion fencing is the greatest tool, but is expensive and difficult to justify (especially when land is leased).
Are feral pigs a priority for industry?	Yes, significant damage incurred by individual melon growers and this is recognised by Melons Australia. Specific knowledge of grower involvement in coordinated programs (such as those run by NSW LLS is not known). No formal management programs are currently in place specifically for the melon industry, Action is needed to reduce substantial losses due to pigs. <i>The establishment of cross-tenure coordinated feral pig management groups in key melon growing areas is recommended.</i> This may be challenging in areas where adjoining land managers are not acknowledging impacts caused by feral pigs to their operations. Melon growing regions in QLD are not covered by a regional coordinator (as yet). Need to engage further with Melons Australia and Hort Innovation to obtain support to establish local management groups.

Key sources of industry information and maps include the following:

- Australian Horticulture Statistics Handbook 2023/24 (2024/25 edition of the Handbook scheduled for release in early 2026): <https://www.horticulture.com.au/growers/help-your-business-grow/research-reports-publications-fact-sheets-and-more/australian-horticulture-statistics-handbook/>
- Australian Tree Crop Map <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/f6dd44763f0b476e8a1c2f0504fc8779>



Photo credit: NSW Local Land Services



Photo credit: Western Downs Regional Council

4.1.2 Sugarcane

4.1.2 Sugarcane	
Industry size, location, value	The Australian sugarcane industry is mainly located along Australia's north-eastern coastline, from Cairns and the Atherton Tablelands in Far North Queensland to Grafton in northern New South Wales. 95% of raw sugar is produced in Qld and 5% in NSW. In the 2024-25 season, approximately 3,700 cane farm businesses grew 28.8 million tonnes of cane on 326,000 ha of land, worth \$2.5 billion to the Australian economy. This cane was transported to 21 mills by road and rail for processing and a total of 3.8 million tonnes of raw sugar and other by-products were produced. Source: Canegrowers, Sugar Research Australia

4.1.2 Sugarcane

Reported feral pig impact – location, damage, cost

Damage:

- All cane growing regions are impacted by feral pigs.
- Crop destruction: Feral pigs root through cane paddocks, eat plants, including the roots, and trample plants, directly destroying them.
- Economic loss: crop damage results in significant harvest loss and infrastructure damage to drainage, fences, dams, creeks and irrigation lines.
- Soil and water degradation: Feral pigs cause soil degradation through rooting and wallowing, and contaminate water sources by wallowing and defaecating.
- Weed spread: Rooting activities provide ideal conditions for weeds to establish, spread weed seeds.
- Disease transmission: Feral pigs can carry and spread diseases that can affect crops, livestock and human health.

Affected locations:

- Wet Tropics region – extending from south of Ingham to Cairns are being significantly impacted by feral pigs. Challenges with feral pig management due to plentiful feed and water throughout the region as well as limited, effectively run coordinated and collaborative feral pig management programs in place.
- The problem has got worse in the region over the past three years. In Innisfail region, pig damage has been lower than previous years – only seeing blocks with about 20% damage, not 60%. This could suggest that pressure on the population over the past 2.5 years may have reduced local populations.
- Mackay / Plane Creek – feral pig impacts in this region are growing. Good management program is in place.

Costs:

- No industry level information available on economic losses caused by feral pigs to the Australian sugar industry as a whole or costs spent by growers on their control.
- CANEGROWERS quote that growers in some of the worst affected regions could, on a bad year, lose up to 25% of their crop to feral pig damage¹.
- Mitchell and Dorney (2002) estimated yield losses of 1.4-6.8% to the sugarcane industry due to feral pigs.
- Discussions with regional groups as part of this project obtained local data on estimated annual cane loss:
 - Arriga (Mareeba mill) \$4.3M/yr (based on 1.05% loss due to feral pig damage, \$538.25/tonne; 110t/ha; 6969 ha to cane).
 - Burdekin: \$1.8m last year.
 - Innisfail: \$800,000 (2022; 21,548 tonnes destroyed over 1182 ha over 20 properties).
 - Hinchinbrook Community Feral Pig Management Program 2022: \$414,800 – none of these four estimates above included infrastructure and mill costs.
 - Whitsunday Regional Council area - \$689,472 (2020, based on a total planted area of 20,160 ha, cane yield of 80t/ha). Total region-wide cost of repairs to on-farm irrigation infrastructure and additional fencing costs attributable to feral pigs was estimated at \$147,414 per annum (Synergies 2020).
 - Gordonvale - \$1.2-1.5 million per year in lost production.
- Sugar Research Australia has estimated that feral pigs cause annual losses of 20,000 tonnes of sugarcane. See [here](#).
- Management of plant diseases (e.g. mosaic, ratoon stunting disease) made more complicated by feral pig activity. Chemicals are applied to the soil and once plants emerge, pigs come in, root around and disrupt the efficacy of the treatment. Treatment is not necessarily reapplied, but need to deal with increased weed burden (labour, further inputs).
- Cane growers continue to be significantly impacted by feral pigs.

Control

- Most cane growers do not work with neighbours to control feral pigs in their area.
- Management is primarily 1080 fruit baiting (bananas or mangoes).
- Grain baiting is not common, though some success is being reported with treated cracked corn. This will be explored in a NFPMC Program co-investment project in the Innisfail region.
- Trapping is also used, primarily using fruit as a free feed. Typically short (3 days) free feeding periods for baiting or trapping – pigs are easily spooked and move on very quickly.
- Due to proximity to towns, hunting is common – which disturbs feral pigs and increases their aversiveness. Land managers also regularly shoot pigs.
- Challenge with engaging with public land managers (e.g. council, Defence etc.) to be coordinate activities
- Some aerial shooting programs (coordinated privately or through local government) are undertaken.
- Variability in skill base of local government.

¹ <https://www.canegrowers.com.au/news-media/latest-news/no-farmers-arent-to-blame-for-feral-pigs>

4.1.2 Sugarcane

Are feral pigs a priority for industry?

In many cane growing regions, feral pig control remains a pressing issue. Sugar Research Australia acknowledge that the challenges posed by feral pigs is vital to manage for the ongoing sustainability of Queensland's sugarcane industry. Ongoing research, community involvement, and coordinated management efforts are essential to mitigate these pests' impacts.

Local coordination is essential to keep cane growers on track and accountable.

The establishment of cross-tenure coordinated feral pig management groups in key cane growing areas is recommended. Additional resourcing required to facilitate cane growers and their neighbours to participate in management groups.

4.1.3 Cropping

4.1.3.1 Grains

Industry size, location, value

The Australian grains industry in 2023-24 produced 51 million tonnes grain, with 24.4 million ha of crop sown. Total value of farm production was \$81.8 billion. The grains industry contributes 26.5% of total gross agricultural value in Australia. 43.7 million tonnes of grains were exported, with a value of \$21.8 billion. The three largest crops in terms of value are: wheat, barley and canola.

In 2023-24 there were 24,331 grain industry levy payers.

GRDC describes grain production as occurring across three main grain growing regions, comprising 13 agroecological zones: North (QLD and NSW), South (VIC, SA, TAS) and West (WA).

Detailed sub-region maps for each of the three regions, as well as information about dominant crops and key features of each region available at: <https://grdc.com.au/about/our-industry/growing-regions>

Source: Grains Research and Development Corporation

Reported feral pig impact – location, damage, cost

Damage and cost:

A wide range of summer and winter grains are impacted but in particular the project highlighted impact to chickpea, canola, faba beans, mung beans and sorghum. Damage to crop (flattening which makes crops very difficult to harvest), consumption of grain (seed) at planting and at maturity. Damage to cropping row formation and land formation e.g. blockage of furrows impacting irrigation and damage to head ditches in irrigation as well as traffic through crops.

Pigs base themselves in peak habitats, which form the basis of their home range, but feeding areas move around the landscape, depending on feed source (cropping program), water and crop height (for cover). Any cropping can be impacted, particularly with riparian and forested area nearby (Lockrey, 2025). Feb to June period - issues where pigs are pulling the grain off and flattening the crop and camping in the crop.

Reported feral pig impact – location, damage, cost

Locations impacted:

- Cereal grains in the Murray Darling Basin area (GRDC northern and southern regions, particularly NW NSW and Southern QLD).
- Central QLD growing regions - farmers along creeks and rivers are most affected, irrigated or dryland (pigs travel along watercourses). In the Burdekin area – summer grains (eg sorghum) near/between cane are particularly impacted.
- NSW grain growing areas (summer and winter crops) - North West, central west, Riverina and the Murray. Across North West NSW: In May, biggest damage at chickpea planting. In Spring, canola is impacted. Pigs do their first lot of nesting in canola then second nest into wheat and chickpeas (as they grow to shoulder height). Faba beans – similar to canola, feral pigs also dig up seed along the row at planting (early April). With faba beans, pigs chew stalks and suck sap out of the plant before the pods appear. In NW NSW, the last 5 years of better rain, productive crops, scarce labour, available water and ground cover have resulted in an escalation of feral pig numbers.
- VIC - cropping areas in the north west (wheat and barley).
- WA - South West Ag region. Pigs are established in the north of this cropping area down through to forested areas. Now in eastern cropping zone.
 - Northern grain growing region as well as mid west where the issue has worsened over time. Pigs move and spread along river systems. One property in the mid west, south east of Geraldton (with cropping and Merino sheep), located near a river and nature reserve reported losing 30ha from 280ha of lupins this year, valued at \$30,000. Losses of tens of thousands of dollars a year due to pig damage². Considered that there could be millions of dollars worth of cropping loss in this region due to feral pigs. Northern Agricultural Region culled 11,800 pigs from Jan-Jun 2025 across a 550,000-hectare land area near Geraldton. Reports of pigs consuming planted seed and mature grain, soil loss, nesting in flowering canola, flattening plants and eating canola flowers before moving on to eat wheat when it was ripe.
 - Central Wheatbelt: western area of the wheatbelt zones, affecting canola, wheat, barley, lupins. Impact occurs coming into spring from when canola is flowering, pigs follow (and dig up) the planted seed at seeding, and again consume the grain at maturity.

On the east coast, generally impacts considered to have worsened over recent years due to the last five years of rain, productive crops, scarce labour, available water and ground cover which has seen pig numbers escalate. In WA reports can be mixed – some examples have highlighted increased problems and numbers (as above) whereas other zones report decreased pig numbers due to effective management programs being run by Recognised Biosecurity Groups.

Cost:

Need a technological, financial or organisational touchstone to re-engage growers and others on a broad scale.

No recent systematic assessments have been done to quantify economic costs to the Australian grain industry for different crop types at a regional level (except for NW NSW). This information is required to prioritise action on feral pigs for growers at a regional level. Once prioritised, GRDC are open to addressing this through their National Grower Network funding.

Damage and cost information from published work or projects:

1. Damage reported in Latham and Latham (2025) update: Feral pigs are considered a major problem for grain growers, particularly in central NSW, southern Queensland, and some areas of Western Australia. Analyses on grain growers concentrated on the following NRMs for which there were sufficiently large sample of grain growers: Central West, North West NSW, Riverina, Border Rivers Maranoa-Balonne, Condamine, Fitzroy, and Northern Agricultural region (Haji et al. 2023). Extrapolating to the whole population of grain growers in Condamine, an estimated residual impact of pigs of \$4.7 million in 2022. Northern Agricultural NRM region \$1.1 million in 2022.
 2. AgEcon for LLS NW NSW 2022/23 season: Powell and Revell (2024) report: estimated regional loss of production provided in Table 1 (did not include losses to infrastructure caused by feral pigs such as fencing and irrigation systems). Grain production losses totalled almost \$40m in 2022/23. In addition to grain production loss, estimated loss of grain in storage to the value of \$2.51m. Reduction in wheat yields of 1.3%, sorghum 3.44%.
 3. Lockrey (2025) reported impacts in Moree plains NSW (Table 2): Summer crops (cotton, mungbeans, sorghum) losses from 1.25%-4%, totalling \$708,235 across 12,875ha. In areas of high feral pig populations, crop losses of up to 100% (mungbeans & chickpeas), 60% faba beans, 50% sorghum are experienced. Winter crops (chickpea, wheat, canola, barley, faba beans): losses from 0.5%-7%, totalling >\$287,000 across 11,360ha.
- Foul waterways, damage and block furrows - costs have not been estimated.
- Vehicle collisions - costs not available.

² Northern Biosecurity Group ramps up feral pig control in Mid West | Farm Weekly | WA

4.1.3.1 Grains

Are feral pigs a priority for industry?

- Considered to be seasonally dependent. When there are bumper yields (as has been the case in many regions over the past few years), feral pig are not viewed as a significant factor impacting yield.
- Grower co-ordination of aerial control attempts have improved, but on ground works have faltered and fragmented. Less overall and interagency co-ordination leading to a lack of engagement and results, despite the issue growing.
- Coordinated programs are facilitated, and co-funded, by local government (e.g. Western Downs Regional Council).
- Like many industries, there is limited ability to survey the levy base in detail due to managing survey fatigue and communication. Current grower surveys do include a question on NRM theme but this is typically focused on non-productive areas on farm and not granular enough to capture feral pig information.
- Data is needed to change attitudes.
- Currently no R&D investments focused on feral pigs. Specific data on their impacts in grain crops is not held beyond what's in the public domain and anecdotal reports of damage. Reporting is sporadic – growers know pigs are present but reports of impact are still more quantitative.
 - Historically, feral pigs haven't been identified as a high-priority pest for RD&E investment (over all other constraints). However, this has shifted recently with increased reports. For example, National Grower Network meetings in Somerton and Narrabri recently saw growers raise concerns about the extent of damage and the need for feral pig management and monitoring training. **Opportunities to support grain growers through increased awareness of training and extension programs available in key grain growing areas need to be actively explored.**
 - GRDC maintains a National Grower Network, where regionally specific extension activities can be addressed. Formal, core R&D requires significant investment proposal development, a year in advance.
 - **Explore opportunities to quantify damage caused and costs incurred by grain growers due to feral pigs across a range of grain and pulse crops.**

Proposed actions:

- **Explore opportunities for key stakeholders (at a regional level) to run master classes on feral pig management, subject to resourcing, which grain growers could attend.**
- **Engage agronomists to motivate growers by presenting meaningful economic data on cost of damage, what needs to be spent to mitigate damage, benefits from control measures and Return On Investment (ROI) information.**
- **Establish a collective model involving key organisations (e.g. GRDC, Cotton Australia, LLS, NFPMC, local agronomists), with initial focus on NW NSW due to existing, trusted relationships. This could include using a local site as a demonstration model.**

4.1.3.2 Cotton

Industry size, location, value

The estimated gross value of the 2022/23 Australian cotton crop (delivered to gin) was \$3.7 billion. Area planted each year fluctuates due to water availability. 627,247 ha was planted in the 2023 season.

There are ~ 1,500 cotton farms in Australia, with the main production areas being central and southern Queensland, northern, central and southern NSW, northern Victoria and small areas of northern Queensland, northern Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

Approximately 66% of Australia's cotton is grown in NSW and 33% in Queensland. Major cotton production areas include the Central Highlands, Darling Downs, Border Rivers, St George, Mungindi and Dirranbandi regions of Queensland, and the Gwydir, Namoi, Macquarie, Murrumbidgee, Murray and Lachlan valleys of New South Wales.

Cotton producing NRM regions (Latham et al. 2026):

- QLD: Border Rivers, Maranoa-Balonne, Condamine, Fitzroy.
- NSW: Central West, North West NSW, Riverina.

The average Australian cotton farm supplements cotton with other crops including wheat, chickpeas and sorghum and many Australian cotton farmers also graze sheep and cattle.

In 2021/22 the Australian cotton industry was estimated to directly employ 7,222 people on farms and in gins; when flow-on effects are considered 21,896 are employed.

Source: Cotton Australia

Reported feral pig impact – location, damage, cost

Damage

Captured for traditional growing region of north west NSW is detailed below. Stakeholder engagement also highlighted that a newer development in northern Australia is experiencing feral pig impacts.

Damage reported in Latham et al. (2026) from ABARES Pest and Weeds Survey:

- Damage to crops, infrastructure, feral pigs contributing to erosion, contamination of water sources, disease risk (transfer through mud), and seeds of invasive weeds being spread by feral pigs (these percentages may also incorporate impacts from other pest species, such as rats).
- 97% of cotton farmers surveyed reported damage to crops.
- Estimated full residual impact of feral pigs to be \$42/ha and average impact per farm that is affected by the residual impact to be about \$98,000.
- Extrapolating to the whole population of cotton growers in the North West NSW, Border Rivers Maranoa-Balonne and Central West NRMs, estimate a residual impact of pigs of \$11.1 million in 2022, \$15.7 million in 2019 and \$25.8 million in 2016.

Powell and Revell (2024) report: estimated regional loss in cotton lint production (both irrigated and dryland): \$9.54m in north west NSW. Loss estimates did not include losses to infrastructure caused by feral pigs such as fencing and irrigation systems.

Lockrey (2025) reported impacts in the Moree Plains NSW:

- Cotton provides adequate protein levels (>13%) in plant terminals and green bolls to support pigs breeding. Once above shoulder height, pigs will nest in a crop. Nesting causes physical damage to crop, at 20-100m² per nest. High levels of green boll removal can massively compromise yield. In high population areas, crop loss has been up to 25%.
- 2019 Berrigal Ck, SE of Moree - 200ha dryland cotton loss, more with partial damage. >\$200,000 on 4 farms. Likely to be >\$1,000,000 in the valley.
- Irrigated cotton over a 2850ha area in the Moree Plains (NSW) - 1.25% reduction in yield \$267,188 loss and \$12,322 spent protecting from feral pigs. Dryland cotton in the same region grown over 3485ha area saw 2.25% loss totalling \$136,438 and \$18,307 spent protecting from feral pigs.
- Additional ~\$1m losses reported by other cotton agronomists in other growing valleys, and additional \$1m impact reported by other large property in SE QLD.

Stakeholder engagement as part of this project also reinforced the above types of damage as key concerns. There are also reports of pigs sucking on flowers for their sugars. As well as rooting around head ditches causing irrigation impact and damage to refuge crops (mandatory with the use of biotech cotton), which are typically legumes, the seeds of which are dug up and eaten post planting.

The extent of damage is not visible from the side of the crop. particularly in irrigated cotton.

Several examples of impacted landholders experiencing abundance of pigs, damage and undertaking substantial control activity are bordering public land (where they are believed to breed up).

- Pigs use waterways to travel and exclusion fencing can't go all the way down to water's edge as it would be taken out in any flood.
- For some growers, feral pigs are having big impacts, particularly those on flood plains where pigs are moving across fields, areas where there is lots of vegetation and along riparian zones. Riparian vegetation is seen as an issue.
- Impact on riparian and natural area varies – some riverbank erosion is caused by wallowing, also threats to fauna (eating turtles). Some growers mentioned these concerns to industry contacts.
- Impacts are considered to be varied across industry though substantial for some growers. In considering impact for cotton, there is impact to cotton itself vs impact to whole farm, which also varies.
- Immediately after flooding populations/impact reported to be very bad. Numbers and impact have increased in recent years due to favourable conditions.

4.1.3.2 Cotton

Are feral pigs a priority for industry?

Anecdotally, cotton growers experienced more damage in 2024/25 season than experienced before. Prevalence of pigs across growing industries has increased due to good conditions. Increased reports of damage as an issue at local grower meetings and to agronomists over recent years. Not considered to be a top 1-2 industry issue but a particular issue for specific areas and landholders.

In the last 5-10 years agronomists have been having to address feral pig impact and damage with clients, with some now addressing feral pigs in cropping plans.

Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) has a long term project with Crop Consultants Australia (CCA, peak body for crop agronomists) where they survey cotton consultants annually on factors that have impacted/influenced their previous season. CCA are looking to introduce a question for the next survey on vertebrate pest impact. The survey coverage is greater than 50% of the cotton growing area.

In the industry, there is landholder led control activity, particularly coordinated aerial shoots (between private landholders and working with LLS NSW), exclusion fencing (which gets damaged) and use of private contractors.

Overall currently not a top (1-2) priority for R&D investment and haven't invested in research. However more recently, the issue has arisen in grower conversations with the RDC, extension teams, and also local grower meetings as a R&D priority for specific areas and landholders.

CRDC see value in coordinator roles. Working with regional providers and coordinators, to partner is the preferred approach, working with others to coordinate extension.

CRDC have previously completed a landholder coordination project³ on feral pigs (supported by grant funding) – it is likely that many of the key insights haven't changed.

CottonInfo (the industry's extension program) released an information podcast for growers on feral pigs including information on pig ecology, resources available and pig control that involved Matt Gentle and Tony Lockrey. This was extended through the NFPAP's newsletter in November 2025 and is available via the cotton industry's extension resources.

Cotton's QLD Development Extension Officer for biosecurity has recently included this focus on feral pigs because of biosecurity concerns raised (disease).

Drone footage of cotton crops shows large areas of cotton plantings destroyed by trampling, nesting and wallowing. Growers and agronomists are actively managing large populations of feral pigs.

Explore opportunities for cotton and grains industries to engage with their respective RDC's to collectively support work to quantify the impacts of feral pigs in cotton and grain production systems and build capacity and capability of grain and cotton growers to effectively conduct feral pig management.

4.1.4 LIVESTOCK

For livestock, disease risks from feral pigs are a major, though unseen, threat.

Specific detail on these risks are included in the below tables for sheep, cattle (grassfed and feedlot) and the commercial pig industry. A valuable summary of the key disease risks for livestock is being prepared by Latham et al. (2026) that will include a selective overview of some pathogens and diseases likely to occur in Australian feral pigs, transmission routes, economic impacts and evidence for their distribution in feral pigs).

Losses are incurred from reduced outputs due to animal morbidity or death, whereas expenditures arise from increased inputs such as vaccines, biosecurity measures, or veterinary services that aim to prevent or alleviate disease. Mass reproductive failures in unvaccinated cattle have been attributed to infection with *Leptospira interrogans* (serovar Pomona), ultimately acquired from feral pigs. Latham et al. (2026) noted that it is difficult to retrospectively estimate the economic losses associated with these specific cases, but similar failures could be expected to incur losses of between \$1,746 and \$52,380 (potential losses derived from five mass reproductive failures attributed to infection of cattle with *Leptospira interrogans* via feral pigs in New South Wales).

³ <https://cottoninfo.com.au/publications/nrm-sustainable-landscapes-case-study-managing-feral-pigs-bugilbone-ridge>

4.1.4.1 Sheep – wool, sheep meat

Industry size,
location, value

Australia's sheep and wool industry (Sheep Sustainability Framework Annual Report 2024) has a flock size of 76.5 million head of sheep (2024) with 31,488 enterprises.

In 2023, most of Australia's sheep population was in NSW (36.6%), followed by WA (18.8%) and VIC (14.9%) and SA (14.9%). Tasmania and Queensland accounted for 3% and 4%, respectively. Sheep numbers by State (AWI 2025) are:

- NSW 24.2 million
- VIC 13.7 million
- WA 10.1 million
- SA 9.9 million
- TAS 2.6 million
- QLD 2.5 million

Top 20 sheep regions in Australia, total head by NRM region⁴ (data at June 2021):

1. Glenelg Hopkins VIC 5,771,394
2. Riverina NSW 5,450,775
3. Central West NSW 4,605,928
4. Wheatbelt WA 4,003,834
5. South East SA 3,902,768
6. South East NSW 3,656,989
7. South West WA 3,229,603
8. South Coast WA 2,988,522
9. Western NSW 2,931,272
10. Murray NSW 2,761,494
11. North Central VIC 2,697,119
12. Central Tablelands NSW 2,386,578
13. Wimmera VIC 2,259,790
14. SA Murray Darling Basin SA 1,803,396
15. Northern and Yorke SA 1,762,868
16. Northern Tablelands NSW 1,554,753
17. Northern Agricultural WA 1,543,611
18. Goulbourn Broken VIC 1,468,521
19. Corangamite VIC 1,427,803
20. Eyre Peninsula SA 1,423,978

Map representation of sheep numbers per square kilometre is also shown at [Australian wool in a global context - Trust In Australian Wool](#).

Wool

The total value of the wool clip to the Australian economy in 2023 was AU\$3.14 billion (Sheep Sustainability Framework Annual Report 2024) with around 200,000 people employed in the Australian wool industry.

In 2024, the value of Australian wool exports was \$2.5 billion (ABARES 2025). Australia is the leading global supplier of wool and the world's largest wool export nation, producing 45% of global wool exports.

Wool production extends across six states, from high rainfall pastures to semi-arid regions. Just over 50% of production occurs in NSW and VIC. However, production can vary greatly from year to year, with the greatest influence being seasonal rainfall.

Sheep meat

The gross value of Australian lamb and mutton production was about \$4.6 billion in June 2023. In 2023, 25 million lambs were slaughtered and processed for meat (MLA 2024), and 10 million adult sheep were slaughtered.

Australia produced 849,249 tonnes cwt of lamb and mutton in 2023 (MLA 2024).

⁴ https://www.mla.com.au/globalassets/mla-corporate/prices-markets/documents/trends-analysis/fast-facts-maps/mla_sheep-distribution-map-june-2021_v02-final.pdf

4.1.4.1 Sheep – wool, sheep meat

Reported feral pig impact – location, damage, cost

Damage and cost: Impact from feral pigs information is not collected nationally. Detailed national production data systems don't specially account for loss from pests. The following cost and impact information are from a range of sources, both published/existing information and that which was captured in this project:

- Extrapolating to the whole population of sheep farms in the Central and Western NSW region, Riverina and SE NSW LLS regions, an estimated residual impact of feral pigs of \$37.9 million in 2022, \$41.1 million in 2019 and \$45.3 million in 2016 (Latham et al. 2026).

Impacts - predation:

- Feral pigs can take up to 30% of lambs in some areas (reviewed by Bengsen et al. 2014) and cause market losses of \$3.3 million to \$7.8 million in the Australian wool and sheep-meat industries (Gong et al. 2009, McLeod 2016).
- Estimated feral pigs caused an average of 12% reduction in lamb losses (range = 6–19%), with losses estimated at \$10 million regionally in the North West NSW LLS region (Powell and Revell 2024).
- Individual producer reported 50% reduction in lambing percentage (Lockrey, 2025), and close to 100%, worth \$50,000 (ABC November 2025⁵).
- Impacts are reported to have worsened recently. Feral pigs is a major issue raised by producers in the most productive/biggest wool growing region in Australia - Yass, Goulburn, Forbes in Central West NSW.
- Report from stakeholder engagement input: Sheep goat and cattle Grazier in SW QLD near Bollon (10,000 acres). Significant impact on lambing and kidding percentages from feral pigs - rough estimate of 30% reduction in lambing rates. Population of feral pigs has exploded, consider there to be a tenfold increase in presence and impact.

Other damage:

- Pasture damage and soil erosion.
- Pasture competition – some pastures (e.g. fodder oats) pigs will actively graze.
- Feral pigs are well known for damaging native and improved pastures (e.g. Hone 1980, 2012) and significant damage to pastures and forage crops (mean 14.5% lost production) has been reported by QMDB (QLD Murray Darling Basin landholders (Gentle et al. 2015).
- Infrastructure, fence lines.
- Contaminate water for stock.
- Disease concerns.

Are feral pigs a priority for industry?

- Feral pig impacts are being raised as an issue by some growers (to AWI).
- Historically have had focus on wild dogs. No specific investments by industry bodies and RDC on feral pigs at present, noting a webinar was held 2024: AWI Extension NSW Webinar - Feral Pig Control, hosted March 2024. <https://www.awiextensionnsw.com/events/awi-extension-nsw-webinar--feral-pig-control/>.
- **Explore opportunities to quantify costs of feral pigs to sheep producers (lamb mortality, marking percentages, pasture loss, soil erosion) in terms of dry sheep equivalents (DSEs).**

⁵ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-11-04/feral-pigs-eating-lambs/105835106>

4.1.4.2 Goats

Industry size, location, value	Australia is a relatively small producer of goatmeat but is the world's largest goatmeat exporter. Australian goatmeat production was 36,904 tonnes cwt in 2023. Over 90% of Australian goatmeat is exported, with key markets including the United States and Korea. In 2023, Australian goatmeat exports represented a market value at A\$237.5 million, with an estimated 2.36 million head slaughtered. The majority of Australian goatmeat comes from harvested rangeland goats. However, the number of animals coming from managed production systems is increasing, with significant growth since 2020. NSW is considered Australia's largest source of goats, supplying abattoirs in Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. Goatmeat production is mainly in the southern rangelands of Australia. Goats are also farmed in the high-rainfall and sheep-wheat zones of NSW, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, Victoria and Tasmania. Industry development is occurring in NSW and Queensland. Development in the pastoral zones of South Australia and Western Australia has been comparatively restricted (DPI 2021). The National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) regions of Cobar, Bourke and Wilcannia were the leading production areas in NSW (2021 report). These three regions produced more than 60% of the goats supplied from NSW. In Queensland, the Paroo, Balonne and Murweh regions were the three largest suppliers of goats. The Barossa/Lower North region was the largest supplier of goats for processing in South Australia, while the North Pastoral region was also a significant supplier. In Western Australia, Shark Bay and Carnarvon were the top two supply regions. Golden Plains was the leading supply region in Victoria (DPI 2021). <i>Source: Meat and Livestock Australia, NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development</i>
Reported feral pig impact – location, damage, cost	Damage Information captured from stakeholder engagement input: Sheep goat and cattle grazer in SW QLD near Bollon (10,000 acres) who is experiencing predation of young kids in managed goat enterprises. • Pig impact on lambs and kids during lambing and kidding. Normal to see killed young animals on drives through the paddocks. • Feral pig presence impacts mothering. • Infrastructure damage: to flood gates, exclusion fencing (create holes, push through), damage to gates. • Fouling watering points (dams and troughs), which causes stock to avoid. They lie in the troughs, jam the balls, wallow in and crowd dams making it difficult for stock to access. Deceased pigs in dams foul the water and stock do not drink it. • Extra labour involved in checking and cleaning out watering points regularly and the presence of feral pigs increases the frequency of this task each week. • Land degradation and pressure on land and pastures. • Flow on impacts of that loss of product, damage and loss of assets, cost of repairs. • More remote properties can be impacted and out of action for longer. • Disease concerns. • Considered that the goat industry is vulnerable to disease risks being a relatively new industry without the significant R&D history behind vaccine development. Cost: information not available.
Are feral pigs a priority for industry?	• Insufficient information. • Individual landholder control occurs (fencing, trapping, baiting, shooting).

4.1.4.3 Feedlot cattle

Industry size, location, value	- Cattle are raised on pasture in Australia, before 4% of the herd are cared for at feedlots at any one time. - There are 356 NFAS (National Feedlot Accreditation Scheme) accredited beef cattle feedlots in Australia, generally in areas which have a ready access to grain, cattle and water. QLD is the largest state in terms of cattle numbers on feed (60%) followed by NSW with 30%, VIC 7% and remainder in SA and WA. - Feedlot capacities range from 500 - 50,000+ head. Total capacity - 1.6 million. - Growth in feedlots is occurring, with continued investment in capacity. As of August 2025, there are a record 1.58 million head of cattle in Australian feedlots, with the national feedlot capacity reaching a record 1.7 million head. - The feedlot industry employs 2,000 people directly and 30,000 indirectly. The Australian economy would shrink by \$10.3B and shed 49,000 full-time employees if feedlots ceased to exist. - Turnover equated to \$8.07B and contributed \$920M to Australia's GDP in 2021-2022. - In 2023, grain fed beef accounted for 42% of total beef production and 47% of the cattle slaughtered in Australia. <i>Source: Australian Lot Feeders' Association Fast Facts, Meat and Livestock Australia</i>
Reported feral pig impact – location, damage, cost	Damage: - Disease concerns with pigs in the pens. Risk for animal disease transmission and spillover between feral pigs and livestock. - Surveillance conducted at a NSW feedlot (research by NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development) has demonstrated pigs and cattle eating from the same bunk less than two minutes after each other. GPS tracking of feral pigs over a 10 month period also showed pigs were coming to the feedlot almost daily for a period of a month and some over the 10 months of tracking use the feedlot almost every single night, spending up to five hours in the area. The project has also captured information on feral pig movement, with potential in the event of disease outbreak that those individuals could spread disease up to 10km. - Feral pigs are sympatric with different livestock production systems through much of their range, including beef and dairy cattle production, sheep wool and meat production, and intensive and free-range piggeries. Pigs and livestock often come into direct or indirect contact by sharing resources, such as feed, water, and shelter. This creates opportunities for the transfer or spillover of pathogens and associated diseases in both directions. Some of the most economically important pathogens hosted by feral pigs in Australia include <i>Leptospira</i> spp., <i>Brucella suis</i>, and Japanese encephalitis virus. This creates opportunities for the transfer or spillover of pathogens and associated diseases in both directions. Some of the most economically important pathogens hosted by feral pigs in Australia include <i>Leptospira</i> spp., <i>Brucella suis</i>, and Japanese encephalitis (Latham et al. 2026). - Muddying areas. - Loss of feed (pig consumption) – grains in feedlots (substantial activity) and stores of additional feed such as silage production. For example: Darling Downs QLD producers were storing a lot of silage during the previous drought however the feral pigs were finding and eating it (leading to a producer exiting cattle). - A percentage of stations in the northern territory have feedlots on them, though they may be smaller and are not exclusion-fenced. Pigs are an issue, getting in and damaging infrastructure. Cost: no collated industry-wide information on feral pig impact and don't currently have information on level of industry effort on control of feral pigs. Some businesses have started to exclusion fence, due to disease concerns, though this is not widescale especially in smaller feedlots. Bigger operators considering risk profile.
Are feral pigs a priority for industry?	- Biosecurity is a strong focus for the industry, key projects underway at present led by the peak industry body ALFA, supported by MLA. Otherwise no formal R&D projects underway directly focused on feral pigs. - Following recent foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) and lumpy skin disease (LSD) episodes in Indonesia, MLA funded an ALFA EAD Biosecurity project to improve the preparedness of the feedlot industry to respond to exotic diseases. This has provided additional manager capacity and suite of ready to use tools for Australian lot feeders. Other work includes: National biosecurity manual for beef cattle feedlots, ALFA Biosecurity hub, and a series of EAD Biosecurity Preparedness workshops across Australia. - Overall there is consideration of feral pigs as part of biosecurity and a desire to understand the issue further, as well as leverage technology and innovation in data collection in managing biosecurity risks.

4.1.4.4 Grassfed cattle

Industry size,
location, value

Australia's cattle herd was 29.9 million head as of 30 June 2023, with the majority in QLD. Australia produced 2.2 million tonnes cwt of beef and veal in 2023 (MLA).

In 2022–23, Australia's red meat and livestock industry turnover was \$81.7 billion. The value of total beef and veal exports in 2023 was A\$11.3 billion. Australia was the second largest beef and bovine meat exporter in 2023, after Brazil and ahead of India and the US (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), Trade Data Monitor (TDM)).

In 2022–23, the Australian red meat and livestock industry employed approximately 418,921 people and was comprised of 76,999 red meat and livestock businesses.

A large proportion of grassfed cattle in Australia are located in regions inhabited by growing populations of feral pigs. In June 2021, the top 10 cattle regions by Natural Resource Management region were: Fitzroy Basin (QLD), Northern Territory, Desert Channels (QLD), North Queensland Dry Tropics (QLD), Rangelands (WA), Southern Gulf (QLD), Queensland Murray Darling Basin, Glenelg Hopkins (VIC), Gulf Savannah (QLD) and Burnett Mary (QLD) ([Meat and Livestock Australia 2021](#)).

Source: *Meat and Livestock Australia*

Reported feral
pig impact
– location,
damage, cost

Damage:

Feral pigs can affect extensive grassfed cattle enterprises as they:

- Destroy pastures through rooting and digging behaviours.
- Cause infrastructure damage to fences, dams and other water sources.
- Are known to transmit up to 34 pathogens including leptospirosis, pathogenic *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, Q fever and pestivirus, exotic diseases such as foot and mouth disease and parasites to cattle.
- Prey on newborn calves; potential for mis mothering to result.
- Can lead to increased presence of wild dogs, affecting livestock.
- Contaminate water troughs and feed with their urine, faeces and respiratory secretions (stakeholder engagement highlighted examples of pigs in troughs and crowding dams, 100-500 at time, preventing access and leading to contamination also with dead pigs).
- Compete with stock for feed.
- Share water sources, feeders, and pastures allowing direct transmission of diseases from pigs to cattle.
- Spread weeds.
- Damage the environment by competing with, and feeding on, native animals.
- Threaten native biodiversity and ecosystems.

Large populations of ungulates (feral pigs, cattle, and buffalo) roam across northern Australia, damaging the structure and function of native ecosystems. Recent research (Crameri et al 2025) showed a four-fold increase in combined carbon dioxide and methane emissions due to feral ungulate damage during the early dry season, compared with undamaged sites.

4.1.4.4 Grassfed cattle

Reported feral pig impact – location, damage, cost

Particular examples and locations that were highlighted in project stakeholder engagement are listed below. A breadth of stakeholders provided perspectives from grassfed cattle enterprises, from family farms to large stations in northern Australia, corporate entities and those with carbon farming projects.

- Reports of increased weed presence e.g. in transport corridors and properties (QLD).
- In QLD, feral pig impact across the state with impacts in regions including Darling Downs, Southern Gulf, Channel Country.
- QLD observation (Darling Downs): once pasture is eliminated, weeds return and sometimes it is hard to get the pasture back.
- WA areas further south, the impacts shift to livestock from cropping.
- Pastoral country in SA
- From western QLD into cattle country (across state borders) and it is particularly easy for them to spread after floods.
- Significant concern in northern Australia regarding disease given sheer numbers of feral pigs and limited access.
- Impact of pasture competition from feral pigs is considered to be underestimated. They will actively graze some crops e.g forage oats.
- Land overturned impacts operations (damage so bad vehicles and horses cannot traverse).
- Northern Australia examples of pigs clearing valuable pasture paddock overnight (nothing remaining), leading to purchasing and transport of supplementary hay from quite a distance and expense. Troughs and dams damaged and water fouled e.g., when it gets dry, you might find 6 dead piglets in the trough. So instead of doing a bore run once a week you are doing it every 2-3 days to check for pigs.
- Northern Australia - under certain conditions, if the cattle are weaker and in dry times, pigs will take live calves. Similarly, observations of cows losing their tails from boars.
- NSW – significant pasture damage in the Tablelands, Megalong Valley. Levelling issues in paddocks, rooting in wet areas creating undulations which causes issues even when trying to spray.
- NSW and VIC - report worsening of the issue over recent years.
- Landholder experience (NSW) is that the presence of feral pigs also increases presence and impact of wild dogs., which target calves.
- Peri urban zones in multiple states are highlighted as a risk with lots of small movements of livestock and potential for contact with feral pigs.

Costs:

- Pasture renovation/re-establishment:
 - Restoration of pastures damaged by feral pigs – cost of \$1250/ha to a small cattle producer in VIC at a total cost of \$150,000.
 - Costs of spraying weeds – e.g, nut grass in pastures - \$80/ha.
 - Choquenot et al (1996) suggested that long-term losses of pasture availability of less than 3% in dry arid zones caused by feral pigs, increasing to greater losses of up to 98% in more stable environments such as northern NSW.
- Gong et al. (2009) considered feral pigs to have a negligible impact on the Australian beef cattle sector, causing losses of less than 1% of production income.
- Disease introductions from feral pigs could result in huge financial impacts to producers through losses in productivity, decreased product quality and loss of international markets. A multi-state outbreak of foot and mouth disease (FMD) could cost the Australian economy over \$80 billion over a ten year period, primarily due to trade restrictions.
- Disease prevention measures – vaccinations for leptospirosis (\$3.50/head) and pestivirus (\$6/head). Leptospirosis can result in abortion, still births, lower milk production and cause death in younger animals; with this disease also being able to be transmitted to humans.
- Powell and Revell (2024) reported that 15 respondents to the landholder survey reported that feral pigs caused a loss to their cattle enterprises. The estimated reduction of enterprise income was reported to range from 0 to 10%, with one respondent estimating their loss at close to \$500,000.
- Synergies (2020) modelled the economic cost of feral pigs to breeding beef cattle operations in the Whitsunday Regional Council region of an average herd size of 635 head and estimated the total cost of damage at \$2,664,635. Losses were attributed to:
 - Losses of cattle sale weight (2.5% lower turn off weights for store weights and surplus heifers) due to destruction of pastures and crop.
 - Reduced fertility rates due to disease and predation (a reduction of 2% was applied).
 - Loss of supplementary feed (2% across all cattle classes).
 - Increased vaccination frequency for leptospirosis (estimated at \$1.30 per head for 10% of breeder cows).
 - On farm water infrastructure (repair work earthmoving equipment and tractors) – experienced by 80% of producers surveyed.
- Infrastructure repairs to fences and water troughs.

4.1.4.4 Grassfed cattle

Reported feral pig impact – location, damage, cost	Landcare Research NZ, in collaboration with NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), WA DPIRD and Department of Primary Industries, Queensland, have been commissioned by Australian Pork Limited to provide a current assessment of the agricultural impacts and costs of feral pigs in Australia. It has not been possible to provide an estimate of economic impacts of feral pigs to beef cattle enterprises due to lack of published studies. Economically important pathogens can be circulated within domestic livestock or maintained or transmitted by other wild species, however, it is currently difficult to isolate the likely contribution of feral pigs to the overall disease burden. Beef cattle was not included in the economic analysis conducted by AgEcon (Powell and Revell 2024) due to insufficient information available from producers. There is an absence of estimates on the economic impacts of feral pigs for beef cattle. Therefore, many beef producers do not consider that feral pigs are a threat to their enterprises. Feral pig impacts on the cattle industry arise from competition for pasture, destruction of pastures and grazing crops, as well as reduced breeder productivity due to disease transmission to cattle from feral pigs, including leptospirosis (Powell and Revell 2024; Synergies Economic Consulting 2020) and pestivirus (bovine viral diarrhoea virus).
Are feral pigs a priority for industry?	The greatest threat of feral pigs to domestic cattle is disease transmission. As these threats are largely not visible to many cattle producers, feral pig management is not prioritised as high as it should be, particularly given the potential detrimental impacts of an exotic disease outbreak on international trade. Whilst there are no targeted RDC investments specifically on feral pigs underway, MLA is a partner investor in the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions and have a focus on understanding biosecurity risk and strategy, acknowledging that feral pigs are a key issue. Engage cattle producers to become more actively involved in coordinated management groups to increase areas under coordinated management and reduce potential harbouring areas. Continued focus on biosecurity risks to provide strong evidence of feral pig threats to livestock productivity is necessary to enhance engagement and involvement in locally coordinated feral pig programs.

4.1.4.5 Pork

Industry size, location, value	In 2024/25, the Australian pork industry produced 450,569 tonnes of pork, valued at \$1.9 billion. The industry contributes \$6.9 billion to the Australian economy annually and employs 36,000 people. The Australian pork industry is concentrated in the southeastern states, with major production areas in southern NSW (especially the Riverina Murray region), southern Queensland (especially the Darling Downs), northern and western Victoria, south-eastern SA, and south-western WA. Proximity to grain-growing areas and abattoirs are key factors influencing production locations. Relative to Gross State Product (GSP), pig farming makes the most considerable contribution to the South Australian economy, contributing between 0.22 and 0.32% of GSP. Source: Australian Pork Limited, Acil Allen
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4.1.4.5 Pork

Reported feral pig impact – location, damage, cost

The Australian pork industry is principally concerned with disease transmission risks posed by feral pigs to commercial pigs, including exotic, endemic and zoonotic diseases. Australia remains free of exotic diseases including African swine fever (ASF), Foot and mouth disease (FMD), Classical swine fever (CSF), Porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS), Porcine epidemic diarrhoea (PED) and Aujeszky's disease. These diseases could be sustained by feral pigs, with sporadic spillover into domestic pigs. Endemic disease transmission such as brucellosis, JEV and leptospirosis, from feral to domestic pigs are not common, however mycoplasma and APP transmission from feral pigs has been reported.

Costs:

Cost estimates for disease impacts have been determined for African swine fever incursions into Australia's feral pig population, the domestic pork industry system and becoming endemic in feral pigs (see Slatyer et al. 2023). It has been suggested that the cost of PRRS, ASF and PED to the Australian domestic industry are similar per annum.

PRRS:

- 38 years after PRRS was first recognised in the US, it is costing AUD ~\$300/sow/year or \$85M per annum once established.
- Modelling by Nathues et al (2017) suggested that individual farms that are severely impacted by PRRS may incur even more substantial losses, projected to exceed AUD \$1000/sow/year.

PED:

- In 2013, PED spread to 29 US states in one year and killed 3.3-10% of the US slaughter pig population during that period. Up to 95% of neonatal pigs were lost on some farms.
- Estimated AUD cost of disease based on a national kill of 5M pigs, a 3.3-10% mortality rate in Australia would cost ~\$50-150M in the first year and \$10-50M in recurring costs in later years for affected herds (~ \$300/sow/year - not dissimilar costs to PRRS in first instance, reducing over time).

Endemic disease

- Costs of \$500,000 for a piggery to manage an APP outbreak that was thought to have come from feral pigs.
- Over a 2.5 year period, piggeries located along a major river in south east Queensland progressively broke with APP and this was thought to be due to feral pig transmission.

African swine fever:

- Slatyer et al. (2023) presented the percentage of properties with pigs in areas with high feral pig density in each jurisdiction. For a slow spread ASF scenario, the total estimated cost to install fences was \$1.3 to \$2.5 million (based on \$8,000-16,000/km for labour and materials); for the rapid spread scenario, the total estimated cost to install fences was \$2.1 to \$4.2 million. An annual maintenance cost of 4% was included, assuming a fence lifetime of 25 years (Powell et al. 2020).
- Cost of establishing and maintaining feral pig exclusion zones around pig production areas ranged from \$35 million to \$47 million over 30 years. Estimated costs were \$90/tonne carcass weight for slow spread scenario and \$209/tonne for a rapid spread scenario over a 30 year period. Higher costs of production could drive marginal producers from industry.
- Total cost estimated for a scenario of endemic ASF in the feral pig population, over 30 years, was between \$439 million and \$1,598 million for a scenario of slow (natural) disease spread and between \$1,020 million and \$2,540 million with rapid (human-assisted) disease spread.
- Response costs comprised the costs of undertaking initial and ongoing disease management and monitoring activities (and included establishing and maintaining feral pig exclusion zones around pig production areas, ongoing passive surveillance in feral pigs, setup of improved vehicle decontamination infrastructure at abattoirs, ongoing decontamination of live pig transport trucks, and management of intermittent outbreaks in domestic pigs ('spillover' events) that could occur intermittently, and ongoing communications about ASF for the pig industry and general public) - estimated to cost between \$170 million and \$1,026 million over 30 years (in \$2018-19 at a 3% discount rate).
- Costs of \$2-3 million to set up additional monitoring as part of mandatory VEBS due to burden of disease risks of feral pigs – this is included as a cost / kg to production.
- Cost of transport decontamination and heightened biosecurity on farm.
- Feral pigs also present significant public health and food safety risks. These have not been estimated.

4.1.4.5 Pork

Are feral pigs a priority for industry?

Maintaining strong biosecurity is a major industry priority. If an exotic disease was to enter into Australia, it would have devastating impacts on pig health and production, close our international markets and cause widespread economic impacts to industry and to the Australian economy. For ASF, which affects both feral and domestic pigs, there are no approved vaccines or effective treatments.

In 2022, the Voluntary Enhanced Biosecurity Standards, developed in partnership between government and industry, were nationally endorsed by the Animal Health Committee. These standards are designed to reduce the likelihood of ASF entering a farm, limit disease spread and size of an outbreak and support risk assessments for permitted movements of pigs and semen in the event of an outbreak. [VEBS Standards](#) (VEBS-ASF 1.7) cover Pest Control (page 51).

VEBS are incorporated into the Australian Pig Industry Quality Assurance Program (APIQ®) as a certification module. Together, VEBS and APIQ® core standards represent the minimum biosecurity standard required to support movement decisions in an ASF response. Compliance with these standards by producers is conducted by independent, third party auditors.

Feral pigs are a source of frustration to pork producers – efforts to strengthen biosecurity through VEBS, biosecurity management plans and projects to support VEBS uptake could all be undone by feral pigs.

The pork industry continues to invest in research, development and extension programs to mitigate disease risks from feral pigs. This includes support for the project ‘Development of a guided property feral pig assessment methodology for pig producers’ (project partners: SunPork Group, The University of Melbourne and NSW Government and National Feral Pig Action Plan) to provide producers with practical guidance and tools to assess and mitigate feral pig exposure risks and demonstrate this what has been done to an independent auditor. No other livestock industry is looking to develop and adopt a feral pig risk exposure tool.

The pork industry has also actively supported the development of epidemiological models for African Swine Fever (ASF) and Foot and mouth disease (FMD) through the University of Melbourne ([Australian Animal Disease Spread Model](#) (AADIS)) and simulation exercises (e.g. Exercise Razorback, Exercise Hamstrung).

APL is also co-investing in a project funded by the Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action to understand disease transmission risks of feral pigs to commercial outdoor production in south west Victoria.

APL has contracted the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions to extend outcomes from this project together with a QDPI project that is investigating disease transmission risks of feral pigs to conventionally housed commercial pigs in south east Queensland.

4.1.5 Other affected industries

The following have also been highlighted as experiencing damage by feral pigs:

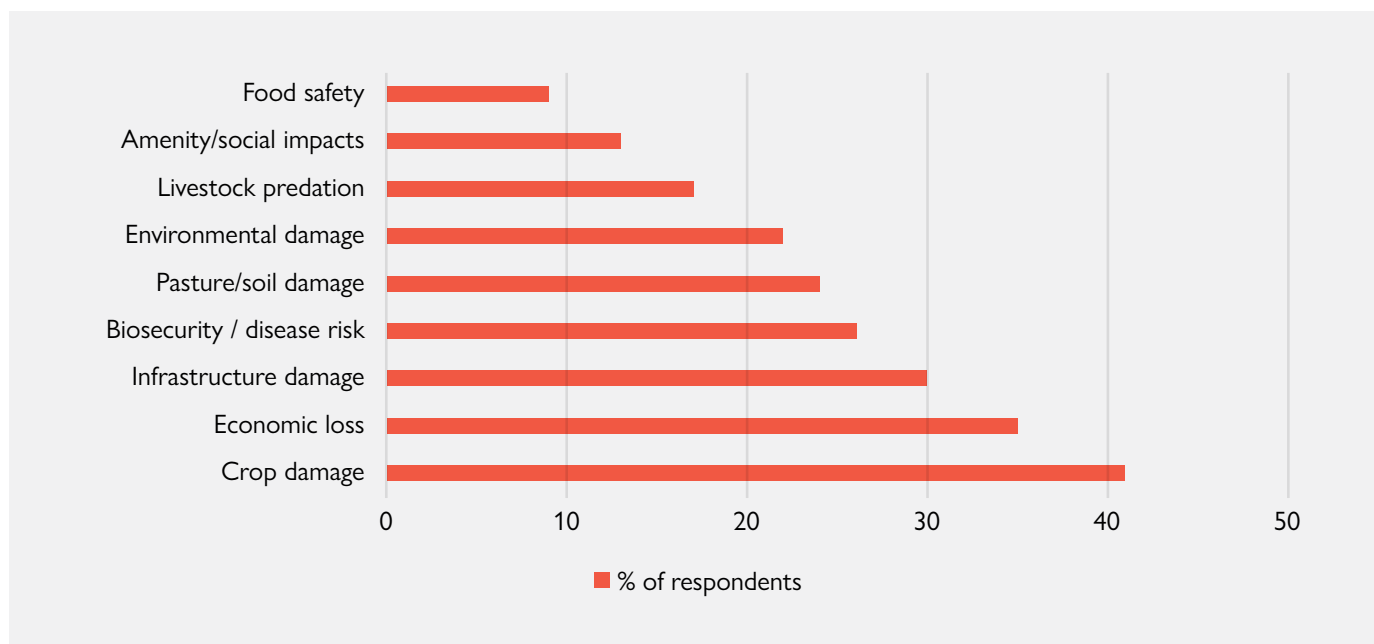
- Plantation timber: damage to blue gum and pine plantations in the Otway Ranges in Victoria includes damaged tree roots, damage to young trees from rubbing and ring barking, damage to waterways and tracks between trees. Then weeds enter, which require spraying.
- Tourism wineries in NSW.
- Rice: “The last time I grew rice, as it matured, the pigs set nests up in the middle of the crop, just destroying it.”⁶ – Producer, Wanganella NSW.

⁶ <https://regionriverina.com.au/feral-pig-program-shows-strong-success-in-its-first-year/69027/>

4.1.6 Overall observations

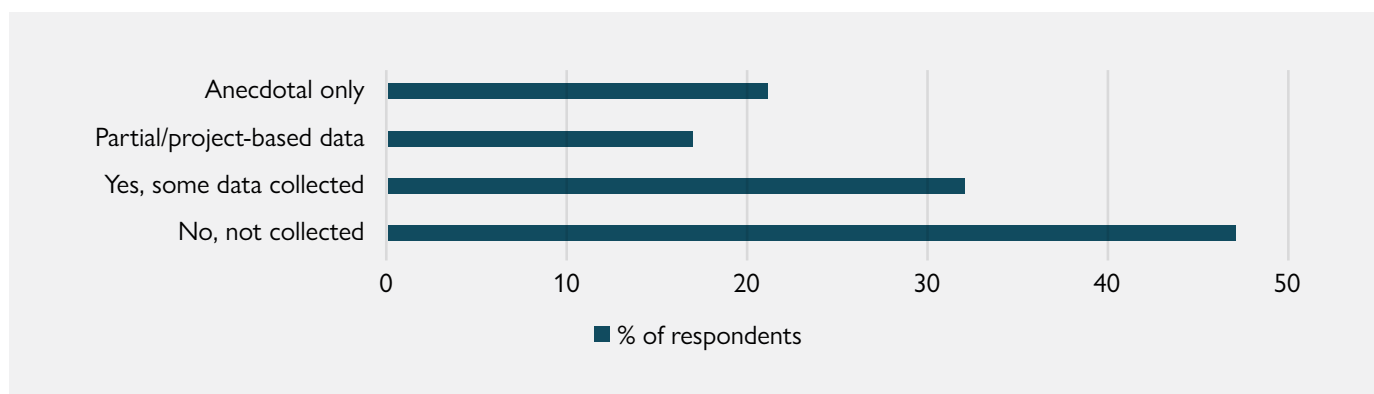
Figure 4 presents the proportion of respondents that mentioned key types of damage caused by feral pigs. Crop damage was the most common damage mentioned by respondents (41%), followed by overall agricultural economic loss (35%). Infrastructure damage, biosecurity / disease risk and pasture and soil damage were rated highly.

Figure 4: Types of damage caused by feral pigs to agricultural businesses (n=46)



Across all agricultural industries involved in this study, 47% of respondents did not collect information on economic losses resulting from feral pig activity (Figure 5). Information that was collected typically focused on pig presence/absence and control activity, or was project based – rather than being systematic, industry, statewide or beyond an individual enterprise. Data collection was typically limited to local level reports, with industry and state-wide estimates not available. This demonstrates that there are significant gaps in understanding actual costs of damage to agricultural productivity together with infrastructure and other downstream impacts.

Figure 5: Data collected by land managers on losses caused to agriculture due to feral pigs (n=47)



Stakeholders highlighted the challenges associated with capturing and reporting data to quantify losses, illustrating that any information collected is disparate:

“Better organised landholders do the work before impact, so costs of damage is therefore hard to quantify.”

“Understanding economic losses is tricky.”

“If we had a metric or rapid assessment method that would be great, but that is not established at the moment, and the range is so broad (enterprises, farming systems) ... so unsure how it would be implemented.”

“Need to see and be able to communicate the cost to a business of the problem being created. e.g. by using dry sheep equivalents (DSEs) for feral pigs, like they did for rabbits. People need to see the impact on their bottom line in dollars and cents (and DSE).”

“Is this the trigger that land managers use/need (to feral pig control activities)?”

“Cropping is easier to understand the impact, given the information headers can collect. It's trickier and more nuanced in livestock.”

Whilst many respondents acknowledged that information on the extent of economic impact caused by feral pigs is important in engaging primary producers in sustained control work, there are challenges in being able to aggregate consistent and sufficient information to present a state and/or national picture of economic damage.

Our discussions also identified several organisations that are progressing data collection or adjusting systems to collect agricultural economic loss data. Feral pig impact data is being sought from landholders who are engaging with them, including header and mill data, as well as through surveys (e.g. Crop Consultants Australia).

In sharing the key findings and insights with participants at the online workshop, it was clear that stakeholders valued the compilation and current snapshot of damage information obtained from this project across a broad range of commodities in one report. The information gathered provides some evidence of the scale of the issue and a stronger economic case than has previously been available. It was acknowledged that the data is not complete and remains in many cases as estimates, given the challenge identified capturing and quantifying data to understand return on investment and management actions in agricultural settings.

Participants felt the key findings from this project captured the gravity of the situation, particularly with reports of significant damage from some respondents:

“(The damage) it's worse than we thought and the need for action is more urgent than we thought.” – Online workshop group

Impacts are widely recognised by producers and different stakeholder types, and damage has in most areas and regions escalated.

4.2 FACTORS THAT MAY BE CONTRIBUTING TO GROWING FERAL PIG IMPACTS

Insights were sought from stakeholders on key factors that could be contributing to increasing impacts from feral pigs. Changes in land tenure and ownership, peri-urban development and subdivision, farm amalgamation, expansion of mining, renewable energy and infrastructure, social attitudes or behaviour around control methods, reduced labour and ageing demographics, governance challenges, activity of hunters and increased need to coordinate between different government agencies were stated by respondents as factors that may be contributing to increased feral pig impacts in different regions.

These factors may also interact, making feral pig management more challenging:

- Consolidation, expansion or change in agricultural enterprises: shifts between agricultural production type can create habitats and provide abundant food and water, supporting larger pig populations and attracting them to new areas.
- Larger properties with fewer people on the land reduce the capacity for regular, coordinated control.
- Subdivision of rural land into smaller lifestyle or hobby farms, especially near urban fringes, will likely lead to fragmented management and less coordinated action, with increased effort/complexity to bring landholders together. New landholders may also lack experience, motivation or awareness of their obligations to manage feral pigs.
- Fewer people living and working on farms, aging landholder population, and less available labour mean less time and capacity for involvement in ongoing, effective coordinated control programs.
- Smaller blocks and hobby farms in peri-urban areas are often less engaged in pest management, creating refuges for pigs.
- Corporate ownership can reduce on-ground management and biosecurity awareness or alternatively, inject renewed interest and capacity in feral animal management.
- New developments such as mines, solar farms, and associated infrastructure can create new habitats, disrupt existing control programs, and sometimes restrict access for coordinated management. It was also recognised that these landowners also effectively and regularly resource pest management as part of environmental or offset responsibilities.
- Access and tenure issues: difficulties engaging with state-managed land and National Parks.
- Creation of watering points for livestock and habitat corridors through agriculture (new developments) or conservation can support feral pig populations.
- Limited outreach and compliance activities to ensure landholders are meeting their biosecurity obligations to manage feral pigs, due to policy or resourcing.

“Unkempt cane paddocks will revert to guinea grass, and together with regrowth, safe havens for feral pigs are created.” – Primary Producer

4.3 CROSS TENURE MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

4.3.1 Public land management

Stakeholders highlighted that localised areas or properties most significantly impacted by feral pigs were typically those that are at or close to the interface of public land and private property (particularly high value agricultural crops), along water courses in the landscape, where active control is not being undertaken or has lapsed. Land areas with vegetation (tree lines, gullies, riparian vegetation) were stated to be the main refuge areas of feral pigs, with animals moving between these areas and on-farm food sources.

Significant frustration was voiced that private land managers consider that they bear most of the financial burden due to feral pigs, both in control costs and economic damage, whilst public land is seen as a refuge for feral pigs. It was considered that environmental stewards (governments) need to make lasting and commensurate commitments to control feral pigs on public land to reduce impacts to both environmental and agricultural assets and improve relationships with private land managers through active involvement in community-led programs.

Many respondents explicitly mentioned that inaction or insufficient action by public land managers to control feral pigs on public land is a major barrier to feral pig management efforts. The reinvasion from national parks/public lands was commonly viewed to be undermining management efforts of private land managers. Calls for greater accountability, funding for feral pig control programs on public land and cross tenure coordination were raised.

Private land managers expressed frustration with public agencies for not doing more to reduce feral pig populations on public land, not communicating management activities being undertaken with local communities and/or not knowing who to speak with in the public agency to locally plan cross-tenure management actions and/or discuss feral pig incursion issues. These concerns were not region specific – they were raised by stakeholders from QLD, NSW, Victoria and WA.

This quote illustrates feedback from many stakeholders regarding the futility of inconsistent and ad hoc control responses (with the view that reinvasion regularly occurs):

“If landholders and agencies continue to work in isolation, reinvasion will undo local control efforts.” – Online workshop

This issue could be a combination of the need for greater communication by governments with private land managers on control actions that are being undertaken, as well as an assessment of the adequacy of control measures being undertaken.

State Government cross tenure management programs or ‘Good Neighbour programs’ are aiming to build cross tenure relationships and collaborations between public agencies and primary producers by prioritising vertebrate pest management efforts to areas where multiple priorities can be addressed (including protection of priority threatened species, endangered ecological communities and agricultural productivity).

4.3.2 Working with neighbouring private land managers

Stakeholders also highlighted challenges in areas of differing agricultural land use with gaining support from neighbouring land managers for various reasons. These included people not considering that feral pigs are directly impacting their businesses, land is kept for recreational hunting, they choose not to control feral pigs or prefer to rely on services of recreational shooters to remove feral pigs on their land. This can create harbouring and safe refuge areas for feral pigs in the landscape, commonly resulting in ongoing feral pig impacts to neighbours because of limited effectiveness of control activities to remove whole groups of feral pigs. Others also mentioned issues from unauthorised access to properties by recreational shooters, disrupting management activities (e.g. free feeding, baiting and trapping activities), losses of monitoring equipment and other assets, risks to property biosecurity and damage to fences. This means that it is very important to consider issues and approaches including how to bring people together without attracting unwanted attention to a locality and with collection and sharing of confidential information when working with groups of land managers to build trust.

Our discussions identified that primary producers in some agricultural industries (e.g. horticulture) may have limited knowledge of the full extent of feral pig damage being experienced and of resources, management approaches, monitoring techniques and/or programs underway in their region that they could tap into to reduce impacts being experienced. These relationships will be progressed through the National Feral Pig Action Plan’s engagement activities to support these industries with attracting support from their respective RDC to build capacity and capability of producers in integrated best practice management of feral pigs as well as connect them with local government, NRM agencies, state/regional coordinators, and other key stakeholders so they are more aware of current initiatives and programs. Invitations to link into the National Feral Pig Action Plan’s communication networks will also be made available.

4.4 Best practice management – skills and knowledge

Feedback from stakeholders was gathered in relation to capacity and capability of land managers to apply best practice management. The interviews revealed a mixed picture regarding skills and knowledge. Respondents raised that those producers who are highly impacted by feral pigs and are proactive have strong skills and knowledge in applying best practice management. However, across different regions and agricultural industries, the skills and knowledge of land managers is variable and inconsistent especially in regions without active coordinated programs. Whilst land managers may be aware of best practice methods, they were not necessarily confident or able to implement them effectively.

This may be explained by:

- Lack of time, money, or motivation (especially when profit margins are low or the problem is not acute for them). This is a major deterrent.
- Some producers are reluctant to try new practices, approaches or technologies.
- Even where knowledge exists, implementation is not always consistent.
- Newer or smaller landholders, and those in peri-urban or fragmented landscapes, often lack experience and knowledge.
- Some producers are not aware of available resources or do not know where to go for help.
- Information overload and poor communication impedes engagement (materials need to be specifically tailored to suit farmer demographics, terrains, enterprise types).
- Extension efforts are uneven across regions and between different agricultural sectors, with some areas lacking visibility of what is available or access to workshops.
- Lack of awareness of technical requirements (e.g., trap maintenance, baiting protocols) and efficiency benefits of using combinations of different control methods.
- Producers often seek information reactively - only when problems arise.

Best practice management is often not integrated into routine farm operations and may be seen as an additional burden rather than a core activity. Building local champions, peer networks, and trusted advisory support is critical to closing the knowledge and skills gap. Ongoing extension, training and support is required to ensure best practice management is widely understood and adopted.

“Knowledge, skills – there is still a (massive) need for more understanding, and also understanding that this is more cost effective – using all the methods, every tool. We need to communicate the economic impact and losses.”
– Recognised Biosecurity Group

4.5 CURRENT INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT LAND MANAGERS DEAL WITH FERAL PIGS

Detail on the breadth of programs and current activities in place to support affected land managers with managing feral pig impacts were captured through the survey. Many programs and activities are occurring across Australia at different levels by all types of landholders.

Respondents emphasised that coordination, availability of practical control tools, funding/resourcing, trusted advice and evidence of impact were most critical for effective feral pig management.

The need for collective action, sustained resourcing and support that is both practical and locally relevant were also raised.

4.5.1 Coordination and collaborative approaches

Coordination and collaboration was the most universal and frequently cited theme, with at least 33 organisations explicitly mentioning these activities, most notably state and local government, biosecurity association and NRM organisations.

“When all the findings are combined, it becomes clear that managing feral pigs isn’t just about using the right control methods, it’s about working together across whole regions. Effective management needs cooperation between landholders, not just individual efforts, because pigs quickly move back into treated areas. The high costs also show that control must be financially sustainable and supported by shared funding. Another key insight is the need for better monitoring and data sharing so that everyone knows what’s working and what isn’t. Finally, community engagement is essential, lasting success depends on people being informed, committed, and willing to act together.” – Workshop Group

Several types of management groups were identified: formal, informal (e.g. neighbour-based networks, with support from Government and/or contractors) and a mix of these within a region (e.g. coordinated control activity and landholders operating independently). Effective coordinated programs are largely driven by local champions and/or trusted facilitators. The number of coordinated feral pig management programs facilitated by state governments, NRM organisations and local governments varies, largely reflective of resourcing, capacity, capability and funding available to support these activities. For example, biosecurity officers employed by Local Land Services facilitate and coordinate community-led vertebrate pest management programs at a regional level across NSW as part of their roles, Regional Biosecurity Groups in WA allocate resources (including support by Licensed Pest Management Technicians) based on regional priorities set by each Board and local Councils (e.g. Whitsunday Regional Council, Western Downs Regional Council) allocating funding to the coordination and conduct of feral pig management programs (that are financially co-supported through land manager contributions) based on their local biosecurity plans.

Current collaborative and coordinated activities to address feral pig impacts identified by respondents involved facilitation of groups to conduct area wide management (e.g. coordinated aerial shooting, baiting and trapping activities); supporting, leading and/or initiating the formation of collaborative programs, cluster groups or community-led pest management groups, land managers working with their neighbours in locally organised programs and working with councils, NRM groups, public land managers and other stakeholders.

In many areas, knowledge of local programs, and the connections between them are lacking at the regional level. A recurring theme was the need for trusted leadership, long-term support, and clearer roles and responsibility to improve collective action.

Strategic coordination is being hindered by:

- Fragmented land ownership and inconsistent governance of legislative obligations of land managers to remove feral pigs on their land to mitigate biosecurity threats.
- Lack of resourcing to support overarching coordination.
- Poor communication between land managers.
- Reliance on key individuals to drive action.
- Lack of management planning, fragmented programs and/or land managers not working together across different land tenures (both public and private).
- Gaps in land areas (often extensive) that are not part of area-wide feral pig management programs.
- Frustration and burn-out of local champions.
- Programs remaining fragmented, reactive and short term.

Damage caused by feral pigs can be sporadic and vary from season to season. This is reflective of the ecology, behaviour and opportunistic and varied diet of the feral pig. This presents challenges with bringing people together to work collectively to remove populations as well as prioritising industry programs (e.g. RD&E) to support land managers to better deal with feral pigs.

“The findings highlight that future feral pig management will increasingly depend on collaborative, landscape-scale approaches rather than isolated property-level efforts. Given the extensive populations and remoteness of affected areas, individual control efforts are insufficient, reinvasion is inevitable unless neighbouring landholders and agencies coordinate activities such as exclusion fencing, baiting, and aerial shooting. This means that regional coordination frameworks, shared funding mechanisms, and data-sharing platforms will likely become central to future management strategies.” – Workshop Group

It was identified that many land managers still work individually, and this may involve relationships with recreational shooters to manage feral pig incursions on their land. Local information about feral pig presence and preferred habitats is often shared directly by shooters with land managers. With feral pig populations continuing to grow in many regions, the potential to incorporate the services of recreational shooters into locally coordinated management programs by management groups could be explored. More formal involvement in local coordinated management efforts may be an avenue to improve relationships and collaborations between recreational shooting organisations and their members. This could be addressed by local individual groups.

Alternative management approaches are being tested, such as zoning approaches for aerial shooting in Midwest WA to improve outcomes from feral pig management programs and increase landholder involvement. Initiatives to enhance local knowledge of feral pig presence, damage and population sizes to inform management actions are increasing, with platforms such as WhatsApp, web-based forms and FeralScan being encouraged by facilitators or by land managers.

Summary of coordination activities undertaken by different organisations involved in this study:

- State Government - Supporting community-led groups, coordinating landscape-scale aerial and/or on-ground management programs (including access to 1080), organise and fund workshops/field days/extension activities, support monitoring activities to engage land managers, conduct targeted research to improve efficiency of feral pig management programs.
- Local Government – Supporting community-led groups, coordinating aerial and on-ground management programs (including access to 1080 (QLD)), support monitoring activities to engage land managers, management of one full time regional coordinator in QLD.
- Regional Biosecurity Associations (WA only) – Organising and coordinating collaborative feral pig management programs, data collection, strategic planning, responding to land manager issues, employ Licensed Pest Management Technicians to provide control services for affected land managers.
- NRM organisations - Project-based activities that may involve coordination of landscape-scale activities, management of six part time regional coordinators (QLD).
- Peak industry bodies and State Farming Organisations – Advocate for members, provide information, direct members to trusted partners for assistance.
- Primary producers - Work with neighbours, participate in group control efforts (private or run by agencies), often self-fund/lead or coordinate local action.

4.5.2 Funding and resource provision

In some states, support provided may be in the form of subsidised or free pre-feed and 1080 bait (e.g. NSW Feral Pig and Pest Program 2025/26), issuing of baited grain (and fruit or meat in QLD, where permitted), co-funding for control activities and loaning of traps, bait stations and other resources.

Generally, funding is grant or project-based, with short-term funding cycles and limited budgets to cover operational costs, group facilitation and/or infrastructure. Grants are primarily available for protection of environmental assets rather than for agriculture. External funding is mostly provided by governments and local/regional groups to address feral pig impacts, with the type and extent of this support varying between jurisdictions. Support for land managers is heavily influenced by the availability, timing and funding criteria. At a more regional level, where local governments provide some direct support (e.g., subsidised aerial shooting, baiting, or trapping), resourcing is often insufficient, especially in remote or high-need areas. There are ongoing challenges sustaining management initiatives over the long-term once producers see that impacts from feral pigs have been reduced immediately following management action.

Most agricultural peak industry bodies and/or research and development corporations undertake annual producer surveys that cover a range of topics to understand current issues, operating environment, production and practices. These often include questions on environmental or natural resource management topics or factors (including pests) affecting production (e.g. Cotton Research and Development Corporation, Grains Research and Development Corporation and Hort Innovation). This study identified that the questions being asked were not granular enough to collect feral pig-specific information. Whilst these surveys may be an opportunity to capture more industry-wide information, all organisations are rightly focused on keeping surveys targeted and concise to avoid survey fatigue and limited in how many are distributed and what additional questions can be included given the need to prioritise research, development and extension topics. Further engagement with peak industry bodies is needed to progress how insights on feral pig impacts can be captured from affected producers.

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) allows primary producers in Australia to claim immediate tax deductions for capital expenditure incurred to remove animal pests where the work is principally and primarily done to protect or improve productive land. This includes pest removal to prevent or combat land degradation caused by pests or to prepare land for cropping or grazing. Ongoing pest control on land already in use is generally deductible as a normal business expense. Hobby farmers and non business landholders generally cannot claim these deductions.

It was noted that there is opportunity to build in greater support for pest management as part of drought resilience and also disaster recovery. There are some examples where this is occurring, such as through the SA Drought Fund that is providing free rabbit baits and disaster recovery packages (flood and fire) that have included support for affected farmers to assist in pest and weed management.

4.5.3 Direct control and on-ground support

A combination of methods are being used to remove feral pigs, with aerial shooting, trapping, baiting, ground shooting (by land managers, professional or recreational shooters) and exclusion fencing mentioned by 60%, 55%, 50%, 45% and 30% of stakeholders, respectively. Aerial shooting was noted to be used to control populations primarily in broadacre cropping and grazing enterprises, often as coordinated activities and funded by groups of land managers, jurisdictions, project related activity or combinations of these. The effectiveness of these control methods are influenced by region, landscape, land use, regulations, and the willingness of landholders to participate. About 20% of respondents stated that professional contractors/service providers are used to undertake aerial shooting, baiting and trapping services, coordinate and organise local management efforts (particularly in areas where trust and neutrality are important) as well as provide technical advice. As previously mentioned, some programs are piloting innovative approaches (e.g., AI in drones, zoning of aerial shooting, adoption of sodium nitrite bait), however many respondents also noted that landholders rely on ad hoc or individual efforts, with varying success.

Management programs in which 1080 bait is being used mostly involve state and local jurisdictions as they have authorised and properly trained persons on staff who hold the necessary knowledge, training, and permits to comply with APVMA requirements and the laws of each state, territory, or local government. Poisoning of feral pigs using 1080 or HOGGONE are regarded as primary control methods for feral pigs (Terrestrial Vertebrate Working Group 2024). Feral pig specific feeders are now available for purchase which can minimise labour requirements associated with free feeding.

Different types of traps are being used by land managers. Many see value in remotely activated steel traps to manage time required to check traps, with others are reporting good outcomes from mesh traps. Trapping is generally labour-intensive, which was recognised by some stakeholders, and is dependent on access to firearms for feral pig destruction. Ground shooting is a key method used to remove feral pigs. Exclusion fencing (electrified or mesh) was viewed as an important tool, particularly by those producing high value horticultural crops and to manage risks of disease transmission to livestock (e.g. to commercial pigs, feedlot cattle). Some respondents, particularly those in the horticultural sector, suggested that subsidies or co-funding be made available to support the installation and maintenance of exclusion fencing, given its high cost.

The use of advanced equipment including thermal scopes, thermal cameras and drones are being used to inform aerial control operations. Monitoring and data collection was mentioned by 35% of respondents, who noted an increased use of camera traps, drones and reporting tools to monitor feral pig presence, populations and/or impacts. Some programs include the use of technology to comply with grant requirements and/or for program evaluation purposes.

“Since 2019, our baseline monitoring has brought a level of adaptive management which we didn’t have before, weren’t able to show without the monitoring what we were getting with the dollars being spent. It’s a great engagement tool.” – Local Government

“We have rough pig density numbers based on thermal surveying work done last year. This information does motivate the group. We’ve explained that a minimum of two shoots is needed and ideally a third otherwise you are throwing your money away. We can’t do aerial surveys each year so use other monitoring activities.” – Local Government

4.5.4 Education, knowledge sharing and capacity building

Workshops and field days are held for land managers, primarily by jurisdictions and NRM organisations, largely when the need is recognised. Industry groups, including grains, horticulture and cotton, recognised that there is a strong need for more extension, education, and support for producers, especially with applying best practice management methods and monitoring technologies. There is a recognised need for this training to be structured, integrated, practical and locally relevant to build skills and knowledge and for this to be delivered in various formats (e.g. workshops, field days, demonstration sites, extension activities, fact sheets, and technical guidance). It would be valued if these activities also incorporate new research outcomes and insights to support continuous improvement in adaptive management of feral pigs. Trusted advisors (e.g., agronomists, local champions, biosecurity officers) can play a key role in supporting land managers to adopt best practice.

“We run workshops with land managers to raise awareness of signs and presence of feral pigs, what to do when you see them and support the use of FeralScan as a mapping tool.” – Non-government organisation

Whilst technical support and the provision of resources (e.g., trap loans, protocols, online materials) are common, knowledge transfer and application can be hampered by information gaps, low engagement, and/or lack of continuity due to staff turnover and short-term contracts.

4.5.5 Communication and engagement

Best practice feral pig management and monitoring information is being shared by different stakeholders using a range of communication channels e.g. through formal extension networks, newsletters, webinars, social media, and informal networks like WhatsApp, FeralScan and online tools.

Whilst strong engagement and information flow can benefit land managers involved in established groups, other land managers face apathy from others, are unaware of information available, are not connected with local groups or experience difficulties with mobilising landholders in their area to get involved. This is especially the case where economic incentives are low and/or perceived benefits from feral pig management to their enterprises is unclear.

Persistent myths, regulatory complexity, and the burden of additional management tasks limit participation. There was a call for more effective, face-to-face engagement, integration of control with routine farm activities, and better alignment of support with landholder needs. For this to happen, it is recommended that resourcing of local coordinators be provided to take advantage of the support available from different stakeholder groups. These are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Common types of support provided to land managers by each stakeholder category

State Government	Fund and coordinate regional programs, provide technical advice, demonstrate use of monitoring tools and support land manager capacity and capability development
Local Government	Support land managers and community pest groups, coordinate control programs (e.g. aerial shoots, baiting), provide technical advice, liaise with other public agencies and private land managers to support cross tenure, area-wide management
NRM Groups	Lead landscape-scale coordination, community engagement, capacity building (e.g. workshops), and support monitoring and data collection, coordinate delivery of externally-funded programs
Biosecurity Associations	Development management plans, coordinate delivery of agreed regional control programs, collect data and report outcomes to land managers and Board, promote strategic planning and facilitate collaboration among growers.
Primary producers	Work with neighbours, participate in group control efforts, and self-fund/lead and coordinate local action, support community engagement efforts
Peak industry bodies	Facilitate grower networks, and support area-wide management
R&D Corporations	Facilitate extension activities, research programs and information sharing.
Farming Organisations	Advocate for members, provide information and support control programs.
Research/Technical	Conduct research, provide technical advice, share research insights with other stakeholders in ways to facilitate uptake and develop monitoring methods, tools and systems
Service Providers/contractors	Deliver direct control services (e.g., aerial shooting, trapping), often in coordination with groups or councils., provide technical advice

4.6 POTENTIAL PARTNERS

The project sought to identify other partners that the National Feral Pig Action Plan could be working with to support landholders undertake effective feral pig management.

Those service and information providers who may be well placed to assist land managers were:

- Agronomists, as a professional network, were highlighted to have a potential role in:
 - Supporting provision of information on management control strategies for particular cropping systems (noting that this would require technical advice and development of tailored resources).
 - Scheduling of management activities into farm management plans and, where needed, coordinate land managers to undertake control actions.
 - Supporting clients to collect simple, representative cost of control and damage information.
 - Compiling benchmarking reports for clients on feral pig management outcomes.
- Veterinarians were also highlighted for their importance and credibility in the livestock industries.
- Established institutions were regarded as a primary touch point for landholders. Local and State Government Departments were the most frequently cited sources of advice (and for VWA, Recognised Biosecurity Groups).
- Industry bodies are generally considered as trusted and play a role in assisting by referring producers to relevant Government departments and other key contacts, and maintaining ongoing relationships with governments and other industries.
- Communication and information sharing is often peer to peer, between neighbours and immediate contacts.

In considering engagement approaches with agricultural enterprises, it is acknowledged that there are many existing local and regional structures, service providers and programs in place. It is recommended that these be considered whenever management plans are being developed or reviewed by management groups. RDCs and industry peak bodies also have well established producer extension structures, networks and other producer engagement processes. All management groups are encouraged to reach out to the National Feral Pig Management Coordinator, state coordinators or regional coordinators (where they are in place) to make sure that these linkages are made and incorporated into local plans.

As an action, this will be regularly advocated through the National Feral Pig Action Plan's newsletters and media engagements as a prompt for land managers and key stakeholders to consider and utilise.

4.7 BARRIERS

Six key barriers affecting feral pig management emerged from stakeholder discussions.

4.7.1 Fragmented coordination and lack of collective action

Many management efforts remain ad hoc, reactive, or limited to individual properties, making it difficult to achieve sustained population reduction. Pigs move freely across property boundaries within their home range, so piecemeal action is often ineffective and wasted effort, unless there is coordinated, landscape-scale action. Land managers repeatedly reported frustration when neighbours, public land managers and/or absentee landholders do not agree to participate in coordinated programs, as this undermines the effectiveness of control efforts. This leads to some land managers resorting to the installation of exclusion fences around their properties to protect their assets, an expensive investment. For others, it causes frustration when other land managers do not recognise how their efforts are protecting their neighbours' businesses.

"Others don't recognise your effort in helping to protect them, leading them to think that they haven't got a problem." – Primary Producer

It was recognised that there must be drive and leadership to overcome these significant barriers. Encouraging land managers to adopt different approaches and alter how they have typically undertaken feral pig management will take considerable time and effort. Community engagement is extremely challenging and requires the involvement of people with good people management, communication and negotiation skills to facilitate these discussions. Initiating the formation of community groups and then sustaining them is challenging, requiring the facilitator to build and foster trusted relationships with group members. However, engagement fatigue, turnover of local staff or champions, and lack of continuity in leadership or funding can undermine these collaborative efforts and make it difficult to sustain group action, especially over the long-term. In regions where different land managers use land differently, it was noted that it can be difficult to find commonalities / key drivers to bring them together.

Some stakeholders (particularly state governments) highlighted challenges associated with organisational capacity and capability; staff turnover resulting in a loss of skills and knowledge and critically, relationships with local land managers which are essential to foster involvement in collective management. Each time this occurs, it takes time, resources and effort to rebuild trust and relationships.

“You don’t know what you don’t know” – some stakeholders expressed frustration about not knowing that joint management programs are operating in an area in isolation from the wider community, new initiatives commencing in a region without exploring whether existing or established programs are already in place, people or institutional arrangements that could be integrated into it and local programs being conducted in isolation from others in a region. These are all missed opportunities to connect groups of land managers together and share local insights, learnings and intelligence. There is also no formal mechanism to log local management programs that are in operation. There is power in coordination at the local, regional, state and national levels – however, in relation to feral pig management, coordination is still in its infancy.

Regional coordination is a valued concept and was implemented in Queensland in 2024-25. At a regional level, there are many players involved including local governments, different agricultural sectors, public land managers and other community organisations (e.g. Landcare, Trust for Nature, Land for Wildlife) that may be disconnected from each other in terms of feral pig management activities. Bringing these stakeholders together to work more strategically at a regional level to support private land holders and share knowledge and experiences is also required. This is in addition to the need to connect groups of land holders with each other to enhance their on-ground programs and optimise effort being applied, which is also part of the role of a regional coordinator. This is still in its formative stages. Other jurisdictions have placed a watching brief on this initiative.

“Need to ensure that new initiatives do not come over the top of established programs and create competing effort.” – Local Government

“(Need) a National framework....national scale inquiries are missing the framework piece and...how people could understand the impact in their context and effectiveness of their solutions.” – Research

4.7.2 Regulatory and policy issues

Inconsistent and unclear responsibilities and weak enforcement and compliance with legislation was a major barrier raised by stakeholders. Regulatory responsibilities regarding biosecurity were regarded as inconsistent or unclear - leading to lack of awareness, responsibility and consistent action across landholder types.

Several respondents expressed the sentiment “biosecurity is everyone’s responsibility means that it is no one’s responsibility.”

It was considered that weak enforcement of legislation was causing ineffective and inadequate feral pig control efforts by many land managers. Land managers managing feral pigs successfully do not see their impacts, whilst non-participants get the benefit from neighbour’s management efforts and participation. Relevant findings and recommendations from NSW’s legislative and policy framework were detailed in the recent NSW Natural Resources Commission Report (2024). The NSW Government supported, in principle, to remove regulatory barriers to improve biosecurity outcomes, to strengthen the enforceability of the Biosecurity Act 2015 (including but not limited to issues surrounding the enforceability of the general biosecurity duty) and to enable powers of Local Government authorised officers to include pest animals as well as weeds and allow for other biosecurity functions in emergency situations. The development of a statewide compliance framework to support the establishment of a dedicated invasive species management compliance and enforcement function in NSW will commence in 2025-26 under the Biosecurity Action Plan.

Issues with compliance have previously been raised by both NSW Farmers and Livestock SA:

“We need a cross-tenure, cross-landscape approach to managing weeds and pests that’s more intensive and enforceable than anything we currently have in place.”
– NSW Farmers media release 2024

“Too often there is a silo mentality with each pest species considered separately... A co-ordinated effort remains the key to effective pest animal control across Australia along with appropriate implementation and enforcement regimes underpinned by adequate resourcing.”
– Livestock SA (2018) Submission to the Inquiry into the impact of feral deer, pigs and goats in Australia.

Stakeholders expressed desire for both a “carrot” and “stick” approach to be used by governments to ensure land manager compliance with legislation. Improved knowledge of local population sizes will be needed to support enforcement actions. Examples where land managers (including absentee landholders) are provided with a bill from the regulator to cover costs of control actions, following warnings were raised. For this to be accepted, increased resources will be required for public land managers to undertake control measures on public land to manage criticisms from private land managers. It was noted that enforcement orders are used in some states in the US, with land managers needing to show that control efforts have been undertaken. This also leads to defeatist attitudes, or inaction, among some landholders, with perimeter landholders carrying the bulk of the work.

Stakeholders raised their concerns about loss of control methods and options available in the future, whether that be triggered by community concerns regarding chemicals, animal welfare, environmental impacts and safety.

⁷ https://www.nswfarmers.org.au/NSWFA/NSWFA/Posts/Media_Releases/State-s-pest-problem-explodes.aspx

4.7.3 Resource constraints

Many programs rely on grants or short-term funding, which restricts the ability to plan and implement long-term strategies. Land managers and local groups often lack the operational funds, staff, or equipment needed to achieve desired outcomes. Feral pig management is costly and labour-intensive – e.g. free feed for baiting and trapping, firearm and ammunition costs, aerial control, trapping and baiting equipment, exclusion fencing and monitoring equipment makes their management difficult for many land managers, especially if they are working alone.

With little information available demonstrating returns on investment to land managers running different agricultural enterprises on their properties, as well as cost pressures for their businesses, many land managers look for external funding opportunities, subsidies and/or shared funding models to sustain their activities. In many cases, resources that are available are insufficient to achieve desired reductions in populations or impacts. Rather than not commencing the work, the project is undertaken and sub-standard results are delivered.

Many programs do not budget costs for monitoring due to land manager' desire to focus their scant resources on the removal of as many pigs as possible from the landscape. This means that measures of success are not in place (for either population or impact reduction targets). This makes it hard to target efforts, demonstrate outcomes, attract ongoing support and achieve much-needed change.

It was also acknowledged that the most effective model of management – coordinated control across tenure - is typically the most expensive to support.

“It’s one thing to have funding, it’s another thing to use it in the most efficient way.” – Peak Industry Body

4.7.4 Operational and practical barriers

The scale of the problem, difficult terrain, and the intelligence and mobility of pigs make control logistically challenging. Challenges are exacerbated by labour shortages in regional areas and the need for specialised equipment.

4.7.5 Knowledge, skills, and communication gaps

Not all land managers are aware of, or have access to, best practice methods and supporting resources. Persistent misinformation and myths and lack of trusted local advice can cause ineffective or counterproductive actions.

“People believing that meat baiting makes a difference in feral pig control. Everyone needing to understand that hunting doesn’t make much of a difference at all.”
– Local Government

4.7.6 Data and monitoring deficiencies

Without robust data on pig populations, impacts, and control effectiveness, it’s hard for land managers to measure progress, justify their investment (time, equipment, materials, labour, money), adapt how control actions are undertaken and/or stay motivated over time.

“Lack of robust data on losses to industry leads to an underestimation of the problem by government and industry, impeding resource allocation.” - Peak Industry Body

5

RECOMMENDATIONS

The positive engagement with stakeholders involved in this study provided a solid platform to progress these recommendations to drive real reductions in agricultural losses from feral pigs through active and well-supported area-wide, coordinated and collaborative management programs.



Photo credit: Whitsunday Regional Council

5.1 STRENGTHEN BIOSECURITY AND REGULATORY POLICY

Many stakeholders highlighted that current legislation is too weak, ineffectively worded and inconsistently enforced. This results in variations in land manager attitudes and inadequacy in how feral pig populations are managed to mitigate their impacts.

The following actions for jurisdictions were recommended:

- Ensure legislation is effective, enforceable and clearly defines compliance obligations of all land managers to control feral pigs.
- Implement stronger enforcement mechanisms for land managers that are not complying with legislative requirements.

In doing this, co-benefits to the environment and social assets may also be realised, given the systems approach required for effective feral pig management.

5.2 DRIVING CONTROL ACTION BY IMPROVED KNOWLEDGE OF LOSSES TO FARMING ENTERPRISES

Improving the availability and use of consistent data on feral pig impacts is critical for motivating land managers to invest in effective control and to support better planning and decision-making. While some estimates exist, information on losses is often anecdotal, collected at individual farm scale and rarely aggregated by commodity or region, making it difficult to demonstrate the true scale of residual losses and to build a strong case for sustained, coordinated investment.

The following actions were recommended:

- Commence development of standardised assessment methods (as planned under the National Feral Pig Action Plan work program) to enable more consistent measurement of impacts across enterprises, commodities and regions.
- Develop additional commodity-specific economic estimates where gaps remain (including citrus, tree nuts, fruit and vegetables, specific grains and pulses, and beef cattle) to help motivate action by those enterprises.
- Translate economic estimates into practical case studies and communication materials that show business-level impacts and benefits from control, and disseminate these through trusted partners.
- Use improved economic impact data to strengthen the evidence base for ongoing local, state and federal support (including coordination roles and local programs), and to demonstrate the value of participating in community-led management groups.

5.3 SUPPORTING SUSTAINED INVOLVEMENT OF LAND MANAGERS IN COORDINATED GROUPS

The need for strong leadership, regional frameworks, empowered local champions and consistent and locally coordinated effort was repeatedly raised by stakeholders. Coordination at the local, regional and state levels needs to be scaled up to underpin management activities at the local level. This will also act as a mechanism to ensure that, together, all land managers working towards achieving the same objectives to reduce impacts caused by feral pigs over the long term – as advocated by the National Feral Pig Action Plan 2021-2031.

The following actions were recommended:

- Prioritise resources, including for local coordinators, to establish and support the operations of local management groups, engage with all land managers in the locality and facilitate management activities.
- Establish coordinated management groups in areas where feral pigs are causing high residual agricultural losses and low collaborations between land managers is evident.
- Strengthen engagement between state and local government agencies and NRM organisations with agricultural industry bodies to build awareness of feral pig impacts being experienced by different primary producers in different regions.
- Adoption of group management planning resources by local management groups that include defined expected outcomes and simple evaluation measures.
- Underpin local management plans with state and regional action plans so that local groups can align their activities and priorities, leverage resourcing, and avoid piecemeal or ad hoc approaches.
- Encourage individual land managers to incorporate feral pig management into their property biosecurity plans to support a more proactive approach to ongoing management.

5.4 UNDERSTANDING WHETHER ACTIONS ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

There is a strong need for practical, consistent and uniform information to be captured by land managers to assess management effort against impacts being experienced over time. This was acknowledged by most respondents who participated in this study. Data is also required to engage individual land managers to join local management groups, to inform planning and conduct of management actions, incorporate into funding proposals to demonstrate the need for change and provide evidence to key stakeholders of the size of the feral pig problem to land managers.

The following actions were recommended:

- Develop guidance materials for land managers on how to use monitoring tools (e.g. drones, camera traps, satellite imagery) to consistently assess damage caused by feral pigs.
- Support community-led groups to incorporate monitoring into management activities and use monitoring technologies to collect data to optimise management approaches over time.
- Develop guidance materials to assist with the processing and analysis of monitoring data by groups of land managers.
- Promote benefits from capturing of practical, local information to land managers and other key stakeholders.
- Explore opportunities to aggregate local data to understand changes in feral pig impacts on a regional scale over time.

5.5 INCENTIVES TO MOTIVATE ACTION

Many respondents expressed concern about costs associated with feral pig management, including costs of free feed required for baiting and trapping. This can constrain on-ground efforts due to the extent of inputs required and lead them to become ineffective.

The following actions were recommended:

- Jurisdictions (and other organisations who are leading programs involving feral pig management) consider alternative strategies that encourage land managers to participate in locally coordinated groups and meet their biosecurity obligations, such as availability of free bait for baiting and trapping programs.
- Support these activities by workshops and field days to build capacity and capability of land managers in applying adaptive best practice management.

5.6 INCREASING COLLABORATION ACROSS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LAND MANAGERS

Stakeholders consistently highlighted that strengthening cross-tenure collaboration between public land managers and neighbouring private landholders is critical to reducing feral pig impacts at a landscape scale. Where public land control is perceived to be limited or poorly communicated, trust can erode and private landholder efforts can be undermined by reinvasion. Improved coordination, clearer points of contact and transparent reporting of planned actions and outcomes were identified as practical ways to support joint planning and more effective, sustained control.

The following actions were recommended:

- Public land agencies actively participate in local cross-tenure management groups and align timing, locations and methods of control with neighbouring landholders where practicable.
- Share details of local points of contact (e.g. group facilitator/coordinator and public land manager) for operational planning, issue escalation and feedback.
- Improve transparency by sharing forward schedules (where appropriate) and reporting outcomes of public land control programs to local partners to support coordinated follow-up action.
- Use agreed reporting tools (e.g. FeralScan) or other fit-for-purpose mechanisms to share activity and results across participating private and public land managers in a locality.
- Identify, document and promote effective Good Neighbour Program case studies (e.g. NSW, Victoria, WA, QLD) and explore options to maintain and scale successful approaches.

5.7 ENHANCE ENGAGEMENT, CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY OF LAND MANAGERS

Feral pig impacts are widespread across Australian agricultural regions, but many land managers do not yet have consistent access to practical training, trusted advice, and fit-for-purpose tools to plan, implement, and evaluate control programs. Strengthening land manager capability, particularly for best practice, integrated control and effective monitoring, will improve decision-making, increase confidence, and support more sustained participation in coordinated, landscape-scale management.

The following actions were recommended:

- Actively engage with industry bodies and their RDC's to:
 - expand access to best practice training by delivering regionally tailored workshops, field demonstrations, and practical 'how-to' materials (including monitoring and evaluation).
 - build land manager capacity and capability in integrated best practice management and monitoring.
- Work with local and regional coordinators to develop practical and tailored guidance materials for land managers on which management methods to use, when and how frequently in different regions and land uses.
- Bring local coordinators and respected contractors within a region together on a biannual/annual basis to share details of their programs and build relationships with other coordinators to foster peer-to-peer learning and community ownership.
- Prioritise extension activities to heavily impacted regions (e.g., northwest NSW; southeast, central and far north QLD) on a landscape-scale basis (e.g. involving multiple land use types (cropping; cropping/livestock; sugarcane/ horticulture/livestock; horticulture/livestock)).
- With support from jurisdictions, farming organisations and industry bodies, develop extension resources on how to establish and coordinate local groups and gain community buy-in.
- Coordinate regular meetings with rural suppliers and agronomists to build their skills and knowledge of best practice feral management training to better position them to support land managers.
- Incorporate mental health awareness and support into land manager' extension materials to address the emotional and physical burden of feral pig management, especially in areas where feral pig impacts are severe, persistent, or where producers feel isolated or unsupported.

"There is a huge young person gap (in this area of work). I think we need to get into education at that young person level as there is a gap in knowledge and understanding. People listen to the shooters and respected contractors – we should use them in our education activities." – NRM organisation

5.8 OPPORTUNITIES TO EXTEND ENGAGEMENT AND NETWORKS

The need to broaden the network of trusted advisers supporting land managers to reduce feral pig impacts were identified. While jurisdictions, natural resource management organisations, recognised biosecurity groups and vertebrate pest contractors remain key sources of technical guidance, stakeholders identified relatively few additional support pathways. Strengthening connections with other influential advisers and improving visibility of available resources would help build capability and sustain coordinated management efforts.

The following actions were recommended:

- Partner with agronomists and rural suppliers to improve their awareness of best-practice, integrated feral pig management (including monitoring) so they can reinforce consistent messages through routine business interactions.
- Leverage industry networks to strengthen peer-to-peer learning by promoting effective local examples and enabling connections between land manager groups across regions.
- Conduct structured engagement with peak industry bodies to increase their awareness of available resources (including jurisdictional and National Feral Pig Action Plan materials) and to connect land managers with local groups and technical expertise.

6

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7 APPENDICES



Photo credit: Jason Wishart

7.1 LIST OF ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

Ag Econ	Cotton Research and Development Corporation	North Queensland Dry Tropics NRM
AgForce Queensland	Crop Consultants Australia	NSW Farmers
AgForce Biosecurity Committee	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation	NSW Local Land Services
Agriculture Victoria	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, Victoria	North West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils
AMPS Agribusiness	Desert Channels Queensland NRM	Primary Industries and Regions South Australia
Animal Control Experts	Department of Primary Industries, Queensland	Queensland Farmers Federation
Australian Pig Doggers and Hunters Association	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development NSW	Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Growers
Arid Lands Landscape Board SA	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development WA	Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services and Partnerships
Australian Banana Growers Council	Etheridge Shire Council	Sheep Producers Australia
Australian Lot Feeders Association	Grain Research and Development Corporation	Southern Gulf NRM
Australian Macadamia Society	Grain Growers National Policy Group	Sporting Shooters Association of Australia
Australian Pork Limited	Gulf Savannah NRM	Sugar Research Australia
Australian Wool Innovation	HeliSurveys	SunPork Group
Burdekin Shire Council	Hunter Land Management	South West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils
Burke Shire Council	Kimberley Pilbara Cattlemen's Association	TasFarmers
Canegrowers	Meat and Livestock Australia	Primary Producer, Bourke NSW
CANEGROWERS Innisfail	Melons Australia	Primary producer, Bollon QLD
Cape York NRM / Terrain NRM	National Farmers Federation	Primary producer, Chinchilla QLD
Carpentaria Shire Council	Northern Biosecurity Group	Primary producer, Gin Gin WA
Cattle Australia	Northern Territory Cattleman's Association	Primary producer, Innisfail, QLD
Central Wheatbelt Biosecurity Association		
Citrus Australia		
Conservation Ecology Centre		
Cotton Australia		

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Reducing residual agricultural losses from feral pigs



Background

Feral pigs are a very smart, mobile, resilient and adaptable invasive species. They pose significant risks to Australia's environment, agriculture, biosecurity, cultural heritage and values.

Their impacts to agriculture are escalating. Whilst these impacts are widely recognised by producers, data on agricultural economic losses caused by feral pigs is very limited. It is largely anecdotal and not necessarily systematically or centrally collated or shared. ABARES have previously estimated costs to farmers as \$156 million annually, however this is conservative.

Australia's Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, together with the agriculture sector, environmental bodies, Indigenous sector and local communities are committed to reducing feral pig impacts.

Project objectives

This project aims to examine how to reduce residual agricultural losses caused by feral pigs in Australia by industry and state, and what is needed to better support land managers to consistently apply effective feral pig management over sustained periods to reduce impacts. This includes identifying service and information providers who are well placed to assist land managers, especially those in areas of high impact.

Project approach

The project is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and is being delivered by the National Feral Pig Management Coordinator between July and December 2025. It involves desktop analysis, stakeholder engagement and preparation of a report for DAFF.

Have your say

We are currently engaging with key stakeholders to inform the study. Feel free to get in touch to share

information or your feedback on:

- **Impact** of feral pigs on agricultural production
- **What's currently being done** to support land managers dealing with feral pig impacts
- **What's needed** to better support land managers to manage feral pig issues to reduce losses to agricultural enterprises.

About the National Feral Pig Action Plan

As part of Commonwealth DAFF's work to address priority pest animals, funding is provided for national coordination programs to support effective, coordinated and humane best-practice management.

Australian Pork Limited hosts the National Feral Pig Management Coordinator, Dr Heather Channon, who drives delivery of the **National Feral Pig Action Plan (2021-2031)**. The Action Plan is a co-investment with states, territories and industry and has been agreed to by the National Biosecurity Committee.



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry



NATIONAL
FERAL PIG
ACTION PLAN

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7.3 SURVEY QUESTIONS

State/local government, Indigenous and NRM organisations

1. In your region, can you state the key locations that are being heavily impacted by feral pigs?
 - a. What type of damage are they causing? Infrastructure losses?
2. What is currently being done to support affected land managers with managing feral pig impacts?
3. How are you engaging with (agricultural) industry/landholders?
4. Are there any management groups in place in your region to allow collective feral pig management?
 - a. How well do the local communities work together?
 - b. Do you know who coordinates these?
 - c. What are the key features of these groups that make them work well?
 - d. What is needed to improve how these operate?
5. What do you think is needed to better support land managers to manage their feral pig issues to reduce losses to their enterprises?
6. Are there any development activities, community issues and/or changes in how land is being used in your region that may be contributing to growing feral pig impacts?
7. Are there other organisations in your region that land managers rely on as reliable and trusted sources of advice to reduce agricultural losses caused by feral pigs? This can include agronomists, rural suppliers, vertebrate pest contractors, veterinarians, local hunters.
8. What advice do they provide in this regard? Is it sustained, ongoing or ad hoc?
6. What do you think is needed to better support land managers to manage their feral pig issues to reduce losses to their enterprises?
 - a. How are producers managing feral pigs – individually, locally managed small groups, facilitated groups?
 - b. Do you know who coordinates these?
 - c. What is needed to improve how these operate?
7. Are there any development activities, community issues and/or changes in how land is being used in your region that may be contributing to growing feral pig impacts?
8. Are you aware of organisations that land managers are using on as reliable and trusted sources of advice to reduce agricultural losses caused by feral pigs? Can you share their details?
9. Is there anything else that you would like to add or share with me about this?

Land manager questions

1. For your sector, can you provide information on the key locations that are being heavily impacted by feral pigs?
2. On your area/farm, what are the impacts being caused by feral pigs? What about damage to infrastructure – fencing, water troughs, irrigation equipment, drains, other equipment etc?
3. How are you managing feral pigs – individually, locally managed small groups, facilitated groups
 - a. What are the key methods used?
 - b. What's worked well? Why?
 - c. When and how frequently are management actions undertaken?
 - d. Does your local community work together to manage feral pigs?
 - e. If so, does this work? What could make it better?
4. What do you think is needed to better support you and your neighbours to manage feral pig issues?
5. What are the barriers affecting feral pig management from your perspective? What needs to happen to fix them? 1) for your farm, 2) for your area
6. Have costs of damage caused by feral pigs to your business been estimated? If so, how do you do this? Do you share this information with others?
 - a. Has there been any information collected by others in your area on the costs of their impacts?
 - b. Has the problem got worse / stayed the same / got better over the past 3 years?
 - c. Do you have the skills and knowledge to apply best practice management?
 - d. What gaps need to be addressed to improve outcomes?
7. Are there any development activities, community issues and/or changes in how land is being used in your region that could be contributing to growing feral pig impacts?
8. Are there other organisations in your region that land managers rely on as reliable and trusted sources of advice to reduce agricultural losses caused by feral pigs? This can include agronomists, rural suppliers, vertebrate pest contractors, veterinarians, local hunters.

Industry

1. For your sector, can you provide information on the key locations that are being heavily impacted by feral pigs?
2. What type of damage are they causing? Infrastructure losses?
3. What is currently being done to support affected land managers with managing feral pig impacts?
4. Who do producers in your industry look to for information on managing feral pigs?
5. Have costs of damage caused by feral pigs to your industry been estimated? If so, how long ago?
 - a. Has information been collected from land managers on the costs of their impacts?
RDCs: do you survey levy payers on undertake environment, NRM, pest management activities (if so, is this reported, shared?)
 - b. Has the problem got worse / stayed the same / got better over the past 3 years?
 - c. Do producers have the skills and knowledge to apply best practice management?
 - d. Are feral pigs a priority for your industry to address? Who do you consider to be the logical lead?
 - e. Is industry willing to support producers through industry-led extension activities to reduce their impacts? (e.g workshops to build capacity and capability in best practice management, use of technology to measure and report damage)

7.4 WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

AgForce Queensland	Australian Wool Innovation	Melons Australia	Primary producer, Dalby, QLD
AgForce Biosecurity Committee	Burdekin Shire Council	National Farmers Federation	Primary producer, Warwick, QLD
AMPS Agribusiness	Canegrowers	NSW Local Land Services	Remarkable NRM
Arid Lands Landscape Board SA	Central Wheatbelt Biosecurity Association	Primary Industries and Regions South Australia	Westpork
Australian Banana Growers Council	Citrus Australia	Primary producer, West Wyalong, NSW	
Australian Lot Feeders Association	Department of Primary Industries Queensland	Primary producer, Innisfail, QLD	
	Grain Research and Development Corporation		



Photo credit: NSW Local Land Services

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