

**COOPERATIVE PROJECT ON
FERAL PIG CONTROL IN THE LAKE MUIR AND
DENBARKER AREAS OF THE SOUTH COAST OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

ANNUAL REPORT

For the year ended 31st December 2004

by

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PROJECT DETAILS

1. Background

In the latter part of the year 2000, a community-based project was established to address concerns about feral pigs in the Lake Muir and Denbarker areas of the south coast of Western Australia. A key element of the project was to involve representatives of the spectrum of landowners and managers to assist with both funding and operational support. The feral pig is a mobile pest that crosses many boundaries of land ownership and hence a group representing a broad cross section of the community was considered far more likely to succeed than pressuring one, or few, landowners to deal with what was considered to be an emerging problem.

Being a community-based project, one of the important responsibilities for the committee is to report on progress, and hence the need for this document. This is the third report from the project providing summary information about the progress that has been made since the project began. The two previous reports are available on the internet¹ and therefore this report serves to update progress with minimal repetition of information already provided.

The printing of the annual report has until now been carried out by the Department of Agriculture, at no cost to the project. This year Great Southern Plantations Limited kindly offered to print the report, again at no cost to the project. The committee wishes to acknowledge this contribution which is in addition to the substantial annual cash contributions that the company has made each year since the project began.

As with all community projects, the committee members are the lifeblood of the process that ultimately gets the results. It is with great sadness that the committee acknowledges the willing contribution of Neil Heffernan who passed away after a brief battle with cancer during the year. Neil's positive approach, enthusiasm and commitment will be greatly missed by all members of our committee.

2. Project Aim

The aim of the project continues to be as follows:

- To facilitate the involvement of all landholders in the Lake Muir and Denbarker areas to contribute to the initial reduction of the feral pig population and the subsequent maintenance of low pig densities.

¹ Copies of the 2002 and 2003 annual reports are available from the Department of Agriculture's website (<http://www.agric.wa.gov.au/>). Simply search for 'feral pig control' from the home page.

3. Project Objectives

As with the stated aim of the project, the objectives have also continued unchanged. A summary of these objectives follows:

- To minimise the effects feral pigs have on:
 - The likelihood of spreading exotic diseases
 - The quality of the natural environment
 - The quality of water in catchment areas
 - Private property adjoining forest areas.
- To share the cost and effort for feral pig control.
- To enable an immediate response to complaints from landholders who have pigs emanating from neighbouring land.
- Reduce illegal pig hunting and release of pigs into forest areas.
- Encourage the presence of participants in the forest “after hours”.
- Improve the community image of government agencies, plantation owners and farmers as responsible managers of feral animals on their lands.
- Augment current CALM trapping and poisoning programs.
- Collect relevant statistics on the distribution and number of feral pigs.
- Monitor the effectiveness of hunting with dogs as a means of feral pig control.

4. Project Management

The ‘Lake Muir / Denbarker Community Feral Pig Eradication Group’ continues to manage all operational aspects of the project. Mark Muir remains as Chairman of the group. The names of other committee members are provided in Appendix 1.

The committee is grateful for the administrative support provided by the Plantagenet Shire. All project funds are held in trust at the Shire and staff at the Shire process all financial transactions. In particular the efforts of the Shire Accountant David Blurton are acknowledged. As mentioned in the previous report, the employment of the trappers by the Plantagenet Shire, on behalf of the group, has solved the key problem of obtaining insurance cover for the trappers.

Membership of the group is open at all times to offers from people wishing to join the team and assist with the project. Anyone who may be interested in assisting should

contact a committee member in the first instance (see Appendix 1 for the names of members).

Organisations, groups and individuals who have made financial contributions to the project are listed in Appendix 2.

5. Project Results for 2004

5.1 Feral pig control during 2004

Trapping commenced on the 12th January 2004 and continued for 13 weeks until the 23rd April 2004. In response to reports of feral pig activity, trapping recommenced on the 29th June 2004 and continued until the 22nd July 2004. Two trappers were employed for the duration of each trapping period. Each trapper was employed for 16 weeks giving a total of 32 weeks trapping time for 2004 compared with 20 weeks in each of 2002 and 2003, and 16 weeks in 2001.

The Albany Branch of the Sporting Shooters Association was requested by the committee to assist in dealing with a sighting in the Denbarker area when the trappers were not available. Unfortunately they were not successful on this occasion but their efforts were appreciated and thanks go to Mark Foster, current President of the Branch, for his positive support in arranging the surveillance teams.

Traps were set at 36 sites during the year (see Appendix 3) and a total of 52 pigs were caught (see Appendix 4). The total annual catch of pigs has declined in each of the last 2 years (see Table 1). The decline in catch coincides with a significant increase in trapping effort with the amount of time that the trappers were employed being more than 50% higher in 2004 than in any other year. The latter suggests that progress has been made with reducing feral pig densities in the project area.

Table 1 Number of feral pigs trapped by locality and year

	2001	2002	2003	2004
Lake Muir	70	51	51	42
Rocky Gully	0	0	0	3
Denbarker	24	44	26	7
Total	94	95	77	52

The weights of pigs trapped in 2004 ranged from 5 kg to 85 kg for sows and from 5 kg to 110 kg for boars. The annual maximum weight for individual boars has declined each year from the start of the project but no clear trend is apparent with the sows (see Appendix 5).

5.2 Assessment of the success in meeting the project objectives

In the 2002 and 2003 annual reports comments were provided on activities related to each of the nine project objectives. Seven of the nine objectives were noted as achieved in the latter reports and therefore no further comment on those seven is offered in this report. The remaining two objectives follow, with an update on progress:

- Objective 1 - To minimise the effects feral pigs have on:
 - The likelihood of spreading exotic diseases
 - The quality of the natural environment
 - The quality of water in catchment areas
 - Private property adjoining forest areas.

The committee is of the view that progress continues to be made towards the above objective. The key piece of evidence supporting this view is the increased difficulty in finding pigs in the project area and the declining numbers being trapped. Feedback from landholders is also supportive of this view. However, two important points that the committee is mindful of are that feral pigs are still causing damage in some localised areas and that the eradication objective is not likely to be achieved in the short term. It is expected that considerable control effort will be required for some time to come. However, the committee still holds the view that eradication from the Denbarker area is achievable. The assessment of progress remains the same as for 2003.

Assessment – Further progress made.

- Objective 4 - Reduce illegal pig hunting and release of pigs into forest areas.

As noted in the 2003 report, this objective will always be difficult to assess because people involved in illegal activity tend to avoid detection. Consequently the committee needs to rely on local reports and anecdotal information. The current view is that there has been a decline in illegal ‘dumping’ activity. However, the committee still considers this issue to be a major impediment to the project and will continue to work on strategies to inform the public that illegal release of pigs is strongly opposed by the majority of the community. The committee will also assist all efforts to secure prosecution of those involved in such activity.

Assessment – Partly Achieved

6. Financial Summary

The balance of funds held in trust by the Planatgenet Shire on the 1st January 2004 was \$29,721. Contributions of \$29,863 were received during the calendar year 2004, including a major contribution of \$15,000 received in June from the Agriculture Protection Board. Operational expenses in 2004 totalled \$41,550 leaving a balance of

\$18,034 as at 31st December 2004. All amounts quoted in this section are exclusive of GST.

The committee will again submit for a \$15,000 matching contribution from the Agriculture Protection Board on the basis that over \$15,000 has been provided to the project by other contributors during the 2004/5 year.

7. Project Plans for 2005

At the time of writing, trapping for 2005 was well underway. Areas for surveillance and trapping will continue as before for the medium term with the main focus being on the farming land / forest interface. The committee is mindful of the lower pig densities in the project area and the need to persist with trapping effort even when low numbers may be caught.

It is again appropriate to acknowledge that in addition to cash contributions, CALM has supplied all the materials required for traps used by the project. Also, the trappers require access to properties to carry out their work and they only do so if permission is received from the owner or manager. The committee appreciates the cooperation of landholders in allowing access to their properties.

8. Conclusion

After four years of effort to control feral pigs in the Lake Muir / Denbarker area, the committee is confident that the trapping approach has largely been successful. There have been many obstacles along the way, and we expect more to come. However, the significant drop in numbers trapped and sighted is a great source of encouragement for the committee to press on.

Finding and trapping feral pigs in low-density areas is a significant issue. Current options are limited and trapping remains the only acceptable choice at present. However, a bait that is specific for pigs may be a possibility in the future. Fermented grain is one possibility, and a large corn and fish bait is another. Both are being tested at different sites around Australia.

The project committee remains positive about the future of control efforts and is still working towards achieving eradication from the Denbarker area.

Appendix 1 – Parties involved in the project for 2004

Committee Members

Mark Muir (Farmer, Unicup and current Chairman)

Mark Barley (CALM)

Darrel Drage (Farmer, Denbarker and foundation Chairman)

Tony Fox (Farmer, Lake Muir)

Murray Gangell (Dept of Environment)

Neil Heffernan (Farmer, Woogenilup) †

Tony Higgs (Dept of Agriculture)

Simon Jenkins (Farmer, Denbarker)

Ted Knight (Dept of Agriculture)

Ashley Muir (Farmer, Lake Muir)

Barry Pledger (Integrated Tree Cropping)

Bob Edwards (Great Southern Plantations Ltd)

David Townsend (WA Plantation Resources Ltd)

Ian Wilson (CALM)

Committee members retiring in 2004

Tom Rouse (Great Southern Plantations Ltd)

Contractors employed in 2004

Peter Cochrane (Accredited)

Kevin Machen (Accredited)

Appendix 2 – List of Contributors to the Project

State Government

Department of Conservation and Land Management
Department of Environment (formerly Water and Rivers Commission)
Department of Agriculture

Local Government

Plantagenet Shire
Cranbrook Shire
Denmark Shire
Albany City
Manjimup Shire

Timber Industry

Great Southern Plantations Ltd
WA Plantation Resources
Timbercorp
Integrated Tree Cropping

Community Groups

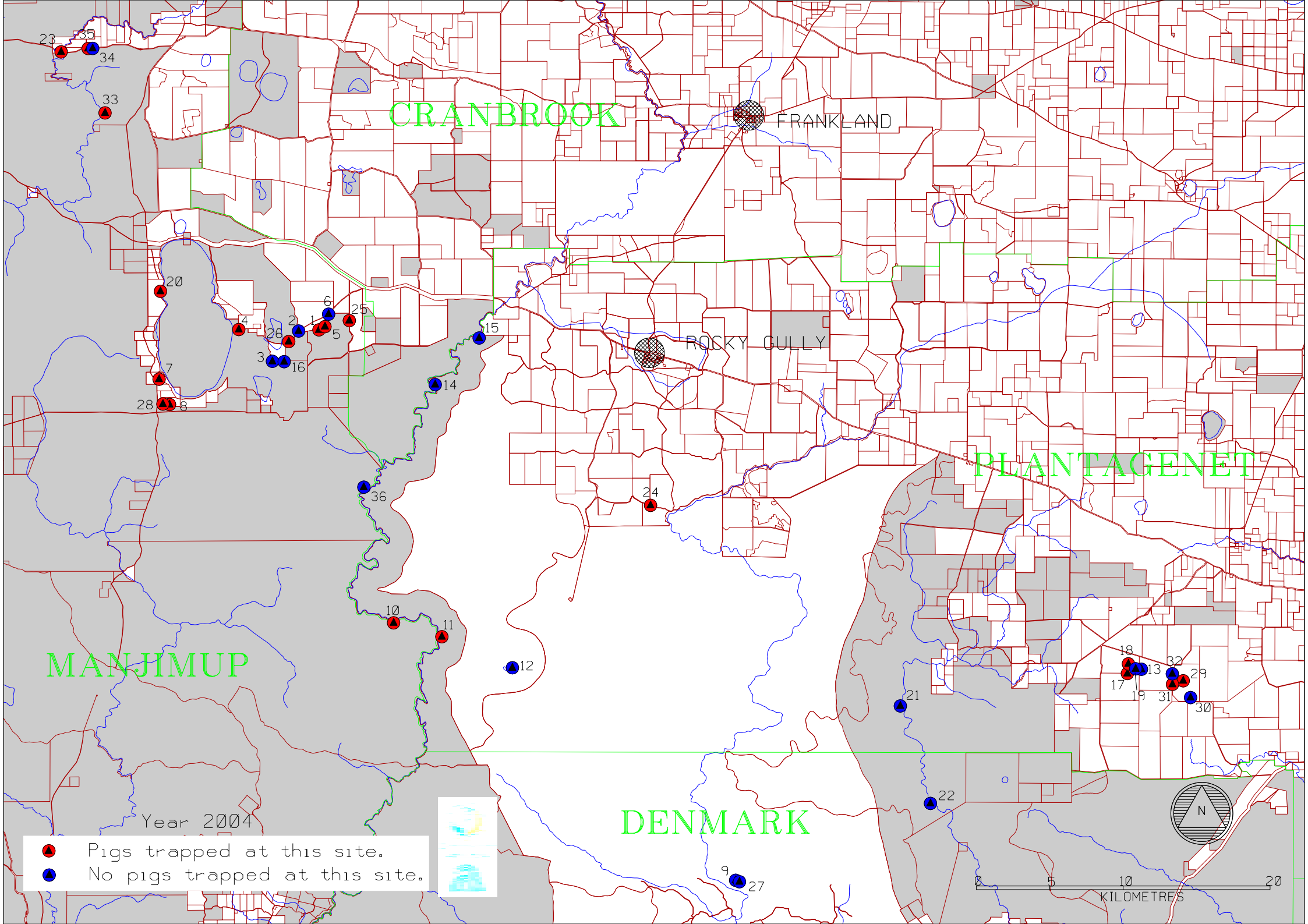
West Mt Barker LCDC
Walpole Nornalup National Parks Association
Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee
Green Skills

Private Land-holders (listed alphabetically)

K Anderson	E, E & S Irwin
DJ & IEM Baxter	MT Jenkins & Sons
NT & DM Beech	HD, AL & NJ Lindberg
J Belfield	Lindsay Pastoral Co
JF & EA Carpenter	K Lymon
RR & L Crook	M & D Noack
Cuddyarup Pastoral Co	G & J Parker
M & G Cuss	JR & ME Rodgers
JH & DK Fisher	B Slade
SG & SG Grylls	Summers Brothers
AH Hall & Co	MJ & SC White
L & H Handasyde	Wood Nominees Pty Ltd
FJ & DM Haynes	

Appendix 3 – Map of feral pig trap sites for 2004

Please see next page



CRANBROOK

FRANKLAND

ROCKY GULLY

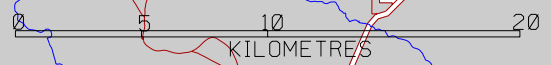
PLANTAGENET

MANJIMUP

DENMARK

Year 2004

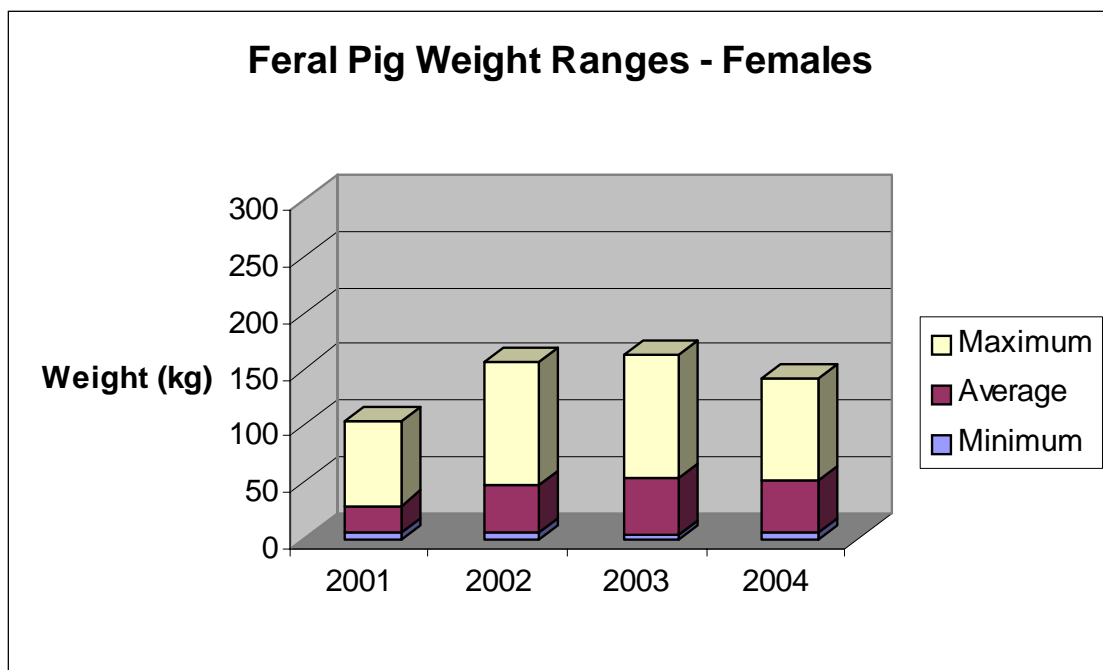
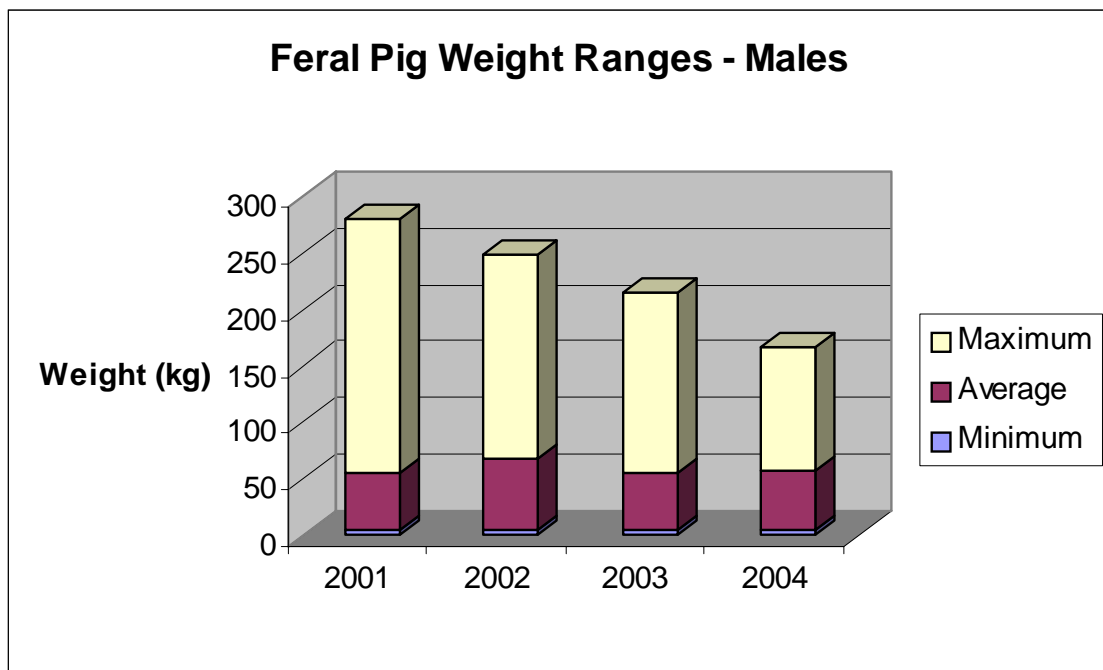
- Pigs trapped at this site.
- No pigs trapped at this site.



Appendix 4 – Number and sex of feral pigs destroyed at trap sites in 2004

Site	Male	Female	Total
1	2	6	8
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	3	3
5	2	1	3
6	0	0	0
7	3	3	6
8	0	1	1
9	0	0	0
10	2	1	3
11	2	1	3
12	0	0	0
13	0	0	0
14	0	0	0
15	0	0	0
16	0	0	0
17	2	0	2
18	1	2	3
19	0	0	0
20	0	4	4
21	0	0	0
22	0	0	0
23	1	0	1
24	1	2	3
25	2	1	3
26	1	3	4
27	0	0	0
28	1	0	1
29	0	1	1
30	0	0	0
31	0	1	1
32	0	0	0
33	1	0	1
34	0	0	0
35	1	0	1
36	0	0	0
	22	30	52

Appendix 5 – Weights of Feral Pigs Trapped from 2001 to 2004





Pasture damage from feral pigs

