

# Community Action

# To Eradicate Feral Pigs

- About the Lake Muir/Denbarker project
  - Eradication objectives
  - Impacts of feral pigs
- Guide to starting a group in your community



# ABOUT THE LAKE MUIR/DENBARKER PROJECT

## HOW DID IT START?

Our group started as a pilot project in early 2001 after local landholders raised concerns regarding the spread of feral pigs, the damage they were causing and the potential for them to become an even greater problem if nothing was done.

## WHO HELPED MAKE IT HAPPEN?

A cooperative venture between landholders, businesses and government departments was thus formed. A large scale trapping program was established through the group's collaborative efforts.

## A 'NOT-FOR-PROFIT' GROUP

The success of the trapping efforts within the first 5 months proved the worth of the project and lead to the formation of the not-for-profit Lake Muir/Denbarker Community Feral Pig Eradication Group (CFPEG).

## ON-GOING ERADICATION !!

Over the past 6 years the group has significantly halted the advance of pig populations, reduced density and continues to aim for total eradication within the area.

## ONGOING COLLABORATION !!

The success of the group is ensured by the continued support from a wide range of project partners (See Project Partner list on back cover).

## GROUP OBJECTIVES

The project has been developed with multiple objectives. They include:

- \* Reducing the risk of spreading exotic diseases.
- \* Enabling an immediate response to sightings.
- \* Reducing impacts on the natural environment.
- \* Reduce illegal pig release and hunting.
- \* Maintaining water quality in catchment areas.
- \* Increase awareness of work done by all stakeholders involved in feral animal control.
- \* Protecting private and commercial properties.
- \* Improve trapping and poisoning programs.
- \* Sharing the cost and effort of control.
- \* Collecting relevant statistics.
- \* Monitor the effectiveness of control techniques.
- \* Encourage a flexible trapping program that is not restricted to business hours or weekdays.

*Photos from left;* Local farmer and Senior Ag Department Vet Dr.Tony Higgs with trap, Members of CFPEG, Members with map of feral pig activity in south west WA.



# FERAL PIGS AND THEIR WIDER IMPACT

Feral pigs are not fussy eaters, they target both flora and fauna. Their keen sense of smell and strong snout and tusks enable them to turn soil over much like a plough as they hunt for roots, tubers and even earthworms. Large areas of undisturbed wetland or farm property can be turned over into a boggy terrain in less than a few hours.

## FLORA

Plants impacted by feral pigs include:

- \* orchids and sundews (as well as other plants with underground bulbs and tubers);
- \* mosses (granite outcrops covered in mosses can take years to establish and can be wiped out overnight by pig foraging);
- \* new shoots of plants (areas recovering from fire damage are particularly vulnerable) and
- \* undermining and toppling larger trees and shrubs (especially likely to occur to roots of the parasitic Christmas Trees (*Nuytsia floribunda*))

*Majestic Spider Orchid (Caladenia winfieldii)*

Photography by A.P. Brown. Department of Environment and Conservation.



# FERAL PIGS AND THEIR WIDER IMPACT

## FAUNA

Pigs also feed on young and vulnerable fauna in the areas they populate. They will feed on:

- \* Small mammals
- \* Reptiles
- \* Frogs
- \* Insects and worms
- \* Birds
- \* Eggs
- \* Young or weak livestock

Habitats are trampled, grazed and destroyed which reduces vegetation cover for native fauna.

When vegetation is damaged animals become open targets for other hunters including foxes and birds of prey. Fouling, site domination and exclusion of native fauna at water holes has also been noted in areas affected by pigs.

## THREATENED FLORA AND FAUNA

- \* Majestic Spider Orchid, (*Caladenia winfieldii*);
- \* Swamp communities of *Reedia spathacea*;
- \* Quokka and Woylie communities;
- \* Sunset, Orange-bellied & White-bellied Frogs; in the south-west, and others throughout Western Australia.



Sunset Frog (*Spicospina flammocaerulea*) Photography by Grant Wardell-Johnson.

# FERAL PIGS AND THEIR WIDER IMPACT

## ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE

Environmental impacts on both private and public property include:

- \* Reduction of farm productivity by reducing grazing area, creating impassable bogs and turrets across open fields and firebreaks.
- \* Reduction of productivity in forest plantations by disturbing freshly cultivated mounds, creating erosion risks and creating impassable areas along firebreaks and open areas.
- \* Spoiling and turning over of wetlands, dams, creeks and other water features.

Because pigs like to dwell in damp and boggy conditions their presence near water catchment areas is continually monitored. To date there has been no immediate threat to domestic (scheme) water supplies but this is a risk.

- \* Increased likelihood of spreading diseases such as dieback, leptospirosis, hydatids and exotic earthworms. The outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in the UK and Europe in 2001 focussed the attention of Australian authorities on risks of feral pigs transmitting diseases to our livestock.
- \* Damaging the pockets of important remnant vegetation that exist on private properties and forest plantations.

## ILLEGAL HUNTING AND RELEASE

Illegal hunting and release of pigs for sport is a major issue. Illegal release is the major cause of feral pig movement across the state. DNA testing has shown feral pigs have been introduced to lower south west from more than 150kms away. DNA testing and tracking devices to understand their potential migratory range has revealed that they will naturally travel only about 20kms.

Methods of controlling such activity include:

- \* Fines and charges in relation to illegal feral pig activity within conservation areas
- \* Fines and charges in relation to illegal use of firearms and dogs on government and private lands
- \* On farm inspections for illegally kept pigs

The Departments of Environment and Conservation, Agriculture and Food in conjunction with the WA Police are working together with other authorities to enforce relevant acts and regulations.

These include:

- \* CALM Act
- \* Wildlife Conservation Act
- \* Firearms Act
- \* Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act
- \* Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act
- \* Stock Identification and Movement Act
- \* Land Administration Act
- \* Animal Welfare Act



# GUIDE TO STARTING A GROUP IN YOUR COMMUNITY

The Lake Muir/Denbarker Group continues to receive inquiries regarding the groups structure and trapping program.

Below is a step by step guide that may be of some assistance in setting up your own local eradication group. It includes some of the protocols we have designed in relation to trapping.

## STEP ONE

### IDENTIFY POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Feral pigs affect a wide range of people and organisations. The success of a committee relies on the energy and financial support it has available.

Potential partners may include:

#### Local Farmers and Community Members

Local knowledge of feral pig activity will be invaluable. Promoting an 'open door' policy to community members at all meetings will maintain community awareness as well as ownership of the project. Having a network of farmers communicating to the group will ultimately make trapping work a much more coordinated effort.

#### Local, State and Federal Government

Assistance from government organisations can be useful whether it be in-kind contributions, such as supplying a meeting venue, staff expertise or financial support.

Within WA there is a wide range of government organisations that may be able to partner with your group. They include those associated with environmental and agricultural issues that have a direct interest in the effects of feral pigs.

#### Agricultural and Forestry Sectors

Plantation companies and other primary industry businesses are often keen to establish and maintain good community relations. These industries may also be facing the impacts of feral pig activity or working to ensure that the future impact is minimal.

#### Landcare Agencies

Environment groups and other natural resource management (NRM) agencies may have skills, funds and networks to complement the group.

## STEP TWO

### ESTABLISHING YOUR GROUP

**Elect your Committee** - including Chair, Secretary and Treasurer:

#### Incorporation

This is a vital component of an organisation's ability to receive funding from most grant providers. If your group is not incorporated you will need to find another group in your community that is willing to auspice your group for funding, such as a local government authority.

#### Guidelines for your group

Will we contract trappers?

Should they be accredited or trained first?

Will we aim to research and document feral pig activity?

The Lake Muir/Denbarker group worked in association with Murdoch University to identify the DNA fingerprint of trapped pigs. This affiliation provided important evidence regarding origin, range, and other useful tracking information.

What other functions will members of our group have?

\* Presentations to the community

Organise information nights, be a speaker at other conservation events, visit local schools, have a stall in the main street or at local fairs.

# GUIDE TO STARTING A GROUP IN YOUR COMMUNITY

## \* Media Liaison

Get your message out into the community by sending articles to local papers and within local organisations newsletters. Other useful forms of media coverage include radio, email lists, websites, flyers, bulletin boards and best of all word of mouth.

## \* Fundraising

There is a range of funding bodies that support conservation initiatives. The following Grantslink website will direct you to grant bodies websites:

[www.grantslink.gov.au](http://www.grantslink.gov.au)

Some useful grant providers include:

Australian Government Envirofund - NHT  
Department of the Environment and Heritage  
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
- NRM funding

## \* Attend meetings and developing affiliations

## \* Prepare annual reports

## \* Prepare financial reports

## \* Meet regulatory requirements

These include;

Awards and Contracts, as well as  
Public Liability Insurance - There may be the potential to share insurance with another community organisation in your area such as a local landcare or catchment group.

## STEP THREE

### TRAPPING PROGRAM

#### \* Gear needed

Traps

Determine an attractive bait (varies with location and pig habits) to pre-feed pigs around traps and to use when setting traps. If grain is used, ensure it is free of seeds.

A suitable calibre firearm to humanely euthanase captured pigs.

#### \* Employing Trappers

An experienced trapper is integral to the success of the program.

By employing a trapper, the committee is able to control the methods used and the area of operation, as well as ensuring compliance regarding access to properties and documentation of trapping activity.

#### \* Trapping

Capacity of pigs to reproduce rapidly (2 litters in a good year) requires at least 70% pig removal a year to maintain population reduction.

The most appropriate method for the Lake Muir/Denbarker area has been trapping. It captures whole groups of pigs. Inadequately controlled shooting and hunting poses a risk of scattering pigs and training them to avoid humans.

Trapping is most efficient at times of the year when water and feed supplies are low i.e. late summer/early autumn for Lake Muir/Denbarker area. Opportunistic trapping in response to community reports is also very effective.

Organisations such as the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia have also complemented control activities in the Lake Muir/Denbarker area. Communication is vital between yourself and such organisations to minimise duplication of effort or disturbance to each others culling programs.

## STEP FOUR

### RECORD YOUR SUCCESSES, REWARD EACH OTHERS EFFORTS, CELEBRATE YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Set aside an annual get together to thank your committee and project partners. Look back on your achievements and appreciate each other for the roles that you have undertaken through the year.

# Project Partners



Department of  
Agriculture and Food



Department of  
Environment and  
Conservation

## WALPOLE & NORNALUP National Parks Association



Working for a sustainable future



GREAT SOUTHERN  
PLANTATIONS LIMITED



## LOCAL LANDHOLDERS



## CONTACT INFORMATION

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