

Bungawalbyn Landcare



Submission on state-wide review of NSW pest animal management issues paper

The Bungawalbyn Catchment is located south-east of Casino in Northern NSW. The catchment is drained by Bungawalbyn Creek and is a complex system of coastal floodplain wetlands, lowland subtropical forests, coastal swamp forests as well as dry sclerophyll forest. It contains extensive protected habitat including Bungawalbyn National Park, Bungawalbyn Nature Reserve, Bungawalbyn State Conservation Area, Yaringully Nature Reserve, Yaringully State Conservation Area and is well represented by private conservation properties. 'The reserves are considered one of the most significant areas of fauna biodiversity in north-east NSW, with a high marsupial population, high arboreal mammal distribution and large numbers of threatened species.' (Bungawalbyn and Yaringully Parks and Reserves – Plan of Management 2012) Doubleduke and Bungawalbyn State Forests also form a large part of this forested region. Whiporie Rd traverses the catchment, with private landholdings spread out along its 57 kilometre length. Many of these landholdings share boundaries with the above Reserves and State Forestry estate.

Bungawalbyn Landcare is currently undertaking a long term feral animal monitoring and control program. With a small grant from the Norman Wettenhall Foundation we have purchased seven remote sensor cameras. These cameras are used to monitor and record feral and native animals on private properties within the catchment. We undertake targeted control measures where needed. Data recorded has helped raise community awareness of feral animal activity.

Bungawalbyn Landcare is also a member of the Bungawalbyn Feral Pig Committee. Representatives attend regular meetings in order to discuss strategies and share information on pig control within the catchment. Weather conditions, illegal hunting and logging activities on both private and State Forestry estate impact on pig movements around the catchment, with pigs causing significant damage to forestry structures and private landholdings.

To date we have trialled various methods of control, including baiting stations, traps and engaging hunters with dogs. In five locations with pig activity, we have monitored a hog hopper supplied by Local Land Services. Pigs failed to feed from the hopper, although large numbers of macropods were attracted to the feed. Free feeding was more successful in engaging pigs, but with a large number of non-target species present, baiting was not possible. Another deterrent to baiting was the close proximity of dwellings and the risk of secondary poisoning to domestic pets and native wildlife such as Wedge Tailed Eagles and Kites. Therefore, although baiting offers the best result for control of large numbers of pigs, on many smaller private landholdings in this region it is not feasible.

Hunters with dogs have had some success in killing pigs on private property with landholder consent. Illegal hunting though, is of considerable concern to local residents. Pig hunters in trucks, with their dogs and spotlights, regularly patrol Whiporie Road at night and have been seen illegally entering National Park, State Forestry and private lands. Hunters have also been observed releasing pigs into these areas and we have had multiple reports of native species being shot, fences cut, lost dogs and territorial disputes between hunters. The Bungawalbin Catchment provides vital habitat for the endangered North Coast Emu Population and we feel illegal hunting activities are seriously impacting on their long term survival prospects.

To date our most successful strategy for pig control has been the use of a borrowed trap. As a result of these successes, Bungawalbyn Landcare is currently engaged in sourcing funds from local enterprises to construct a portable trap that would become a community resource. This would give landholders a control option apart from baiting and having to engage hunters with dogs. We have design options for a trap that is easily transportable and which has a gate mechanism that would exclude non-target species, a key concern in this environment.

Landcare members volunteer considerable time in monitoring and control of foxes, wild dogs, cane toads and feral cats. Local Land Services, National Parks staff and ENVITE provide excellent support with bait supply, information sharing and coordinated pest control efforts. In contrast, Forestry Corp NSW has not engaged in pig control measures that we are aware of, even though large numbers of pigs are present in Doubleduke State Forest and are impacting neighbouring properties.

We need ongoing funding to purchase cameras, which helps raise community awareness of pest issues and also to purchase equipment such as traps which is important for community engagement in long term control activities. Law enforcement presence is key to controlling illegal hunting activities and maintaining the safety of local residents.



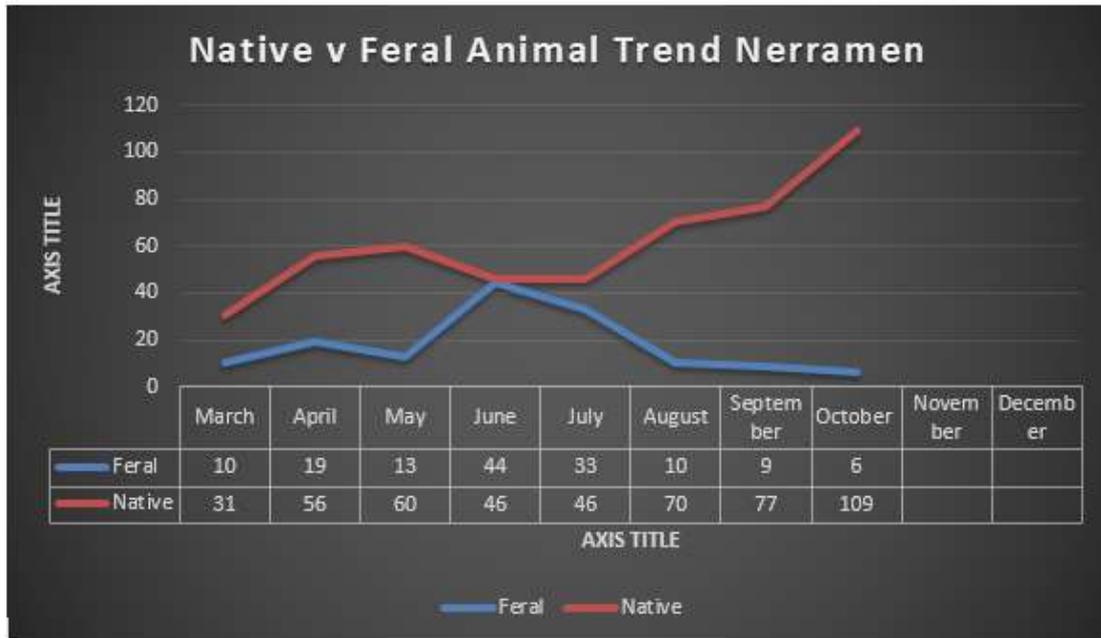
Borrowed equipment used to trap pigs in Bungawalbin



A portable pig trap design with a self-closing door to exclude non-target species.



Illegal pig hunting dogs, trespassing on private conservation land in Bungawalbin, share the same trails as emus, negatively impacting the long term survival of this endangered population.



- 1st July, four Fox baits buried at 29°07'55.40"S/153°09'38.59"E
- 5th July additional two fox baits buried at 29°07'55.40"S/153°09'38.59"E

This graph indicates the effectiveness of a targeted baiting program using fixed remote sensor cameras on a private conservation property in Bungawalbin.

