



MEDIA RELEASE

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7,650 FEWER FERAL PIGS IN RIVER WETLANDS

There are 7,650 fewer feral pigs in the Darling River wetlands than there were eight months ago thanks to a coordinated feral pig control project.

Rain in Queensland over the past eighteen months has resulted in good flows in the Border Rivers and Barwon-Darling River systems and an increase in feral pig numbers.

The latest aerial shoot resulted in 3,496 feral pigs culled. The feral pigs were so concentrated that in some areas the shooters were culling at a rate of one pig per minute.

The Darling Livestock Health and Pest Authority (LHPA), the Department of Primary Industries, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), the Australian Government and the Western Catchment Management Authority have been working together over the past year. They have undertaken three aerial shoots on private land and neighbouring National Parks as part of a coordinated feral pig control program.

The first shoot, held in November 2008 resulted in 1,246 pigs being shot. The second shoot was held in March and April 2009 and resulted in 2,693 pigs and 20 foxes being culled. In the most recent shoot, held in late June 3,496 pigs, 31 foxes and seven feral cats were culled.

The coordinated program also includes trapping and baiting. There has been a steady uptake of CSSP baits. A limited supply of baits are available free of charge when two neighbours are willing to participate.

Pig traps have been available for hire, free of charge, to participating landholders. Forty-five traps have been constructed and approximately 600 pigs have been caught. Due to the high demand a further 14 traps have been built and will be available to landholders.

Darling LHPA Senior Ranger, Colin Betts, said the feral pig control program has been extremely successful, largely due to the cooperation of landholders.

"It's very inaccessible country and at the moment there's an excellent water supply so it's pig heaven!

"We've had a great response from landholders. Approximately 95% of the people we've approached about shooting on their property have been very keen with the other 5% unable to participate due to cattle calving or sheep lambing at the time of the shoot.

"We have again used landholders to assist as local navigators to ensure the most efficient use of the helicopter and shooters.

"The aerial shooters are incredibly accurate. During the last shoot they were averaging 2.3 bullets per kill. We destroyed 3,000 pigs at a cost of approximately \$30 per pig. Considering the environmental, economic and disease factors, that is good value for money.

"Taking 7,000 feral pigs out of the area in the past eight months is a great start and we're confident that landholders are doing the follow up work to avoid reinfestation by baiting and trapping.

"We've been keeping records of the other feral animals we've culled as well. To see so many foxes and cats during daylight hours is quite a concern and we can use that information to plan for future control programs," Mr Betts said.

Chair of the Western Catchment Management Authority, Rory Treweeke, says feral pig control is undertaken to improve land condition and water quality.

"Wetlands in the Border Rivers and Barwon-Darling River System only receive water every few years. The last thing these areas need is feral pigs damaging and fouling these fragile ecosystems," Mr Treweeke said.

"Local landholders are well aware of the importance of controlling feral pigs to improve land condition and water quality as well as improving stock and infrastructure management and reducing the spread of disease," he said.

Any people with concerns or questions are encouraged to contact their local LHPA.

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Captions:

Feral Pig 2: Feral pigs cause damage to fragile wetland ecosystems.

BDarling_Pigs: Feral pigs cause soil erosion, foul waterways and spread diseases.