



Newsletter May 2024



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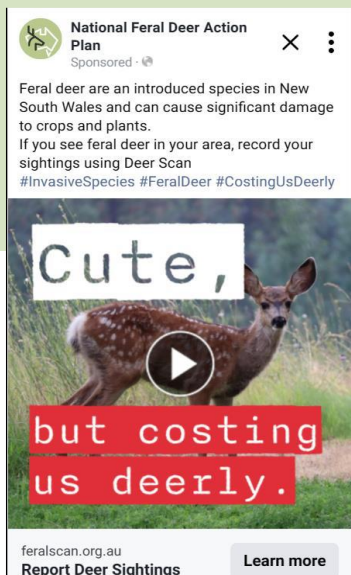
# National Feral Deer Update

From National Deer Management Coordination Project

The NFDAP has had a busy few months with assessing the success of the Cute But Costing Us Deerly media campaign, running a National Pest Vertebrate Aerial Shooting Workshop in February, and planning for the year ahead.

The Cute But Costing Us Deerly media campaign ran for 6 weeks in late 2023, with social media ads in most states, and 8 bus billboards in 4 regions. The campaign aimed to increase awareness of the impacts of feral deer and encourage reporting in areas where deer are emerging. Community engagement with the campaign was extremely positive with visits from more than 274K people, generating 13,600 clicks through to the DeerScan webpage. As a result of the campaign, reports of deer sightings increased by an impressive 44% compared with the same period in 2022 (536 vs 373 reports). The campaign is running again for another 6 weeks, starting in early May targeting deer affected areas in SA, NSW, QLD, TAS and VIC.

This newsletter focuses on aerial shooting as an effective management tool for feral deer, with case studies from the workshop highlighting the importance of engagement and collaborating with landholders.



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## Upcoming events

Australasian Vertebrate  
Pest Conference  
29<sup>th</sup> July to 1<sup>st</sup> August 2024  
Sydney NSW

Australian Biosecurity  
Symposium  
27-29<sup>th</sup> August 2024  
Gold Coast QLD

## WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

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# National Pest Vertebrate Aerial Shooting Workshop

## Canberra February 2024

The National Pest Vertebrate Aerial Shooting Workshop developed from a growing enthusiasm by stakeholders to share their knowledge and ideas of one of most effective tools we have in the control of large vertebrate pests and to develop a minimum standard practices for aerial shooting in Australia. The 2-day workshop was attended by 81 members from 44 organisations, including shooters, pilots, operational managers, planners, policy makers, researchers and program staff, from across Australia. The workshop covered vertebrate pests including feral pigs, deer, donkeys, horses, goats, camels, cattle and buffalo across both public and private land.

Workshop presentations included: large operation planning, improving effectiveness, risk management, community engagement and research. Discussions included helicopter operations, pilot and marksman training, equipment safety, eradication and control approaches, emerging technology and building social licence.

The workshop was hosted by the National Feral Deer and Feral Pig Coordinators, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (WA) and Department of Primary Industries and Regions (SA).



Workshop attendees from across Australia met in Canberra to discuss pest vertebrate aerial shooting processes.



Digital live polls highlighted:

- Half the attendees wanted more national workshops.
- Two thirds wanted to collaborate on operations.
- Experience and skills of operators were paramount.
- There is commitment to continue improving all aspects of operations over the next decade.



Department of  
Primary Industries and  
Regional Development



Government  
of South Australia  
Department of Primary  
Industries and Regions



NATIONAL  
FERAL PIG  
ACTION PLAN  
[www.feralpigs.com.au](http://www.feralpigs.com.au)



National  
Feral Deer  
Action Plan

WE WANT YOUR DEER PHOTO'S – Do you have a photo that sends a strong message, we would love to include it in feral deer awareness campaigns. Please email:  
[coordinator@feraldeerplan.org.au](mailto:coordinator@feraldeerplan.org.au)



# CONTROL PROJECT

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## Considerations for Planning Large Scale Aerial Shooting Operations

### Mal Leeson - Local Land Services (LLS) Regional Delivery



Planning large-scale shooting operations requires significant time and effort to ensure seamless execution. All aspects of the project, including total area, land tenure, number of participating and non-consenting holdings, reasons for non-consent, sensitive areas like livestock, habitation, public visitation, aviation hazards, and staging locations, must be considered to ensure safety and client satisfaction throughout.

LLS uses guiding documents and a series of approval and operational forms during the planning phase of any shooting operation (examples at bottom right). These include job safety analyses, daily briefing forms, flight following templates, and passenger manifests. The primary guiding document for the program is the FFAST (Feral Animal Aerial Shooting Team) Operation Shoot Plan, which requires sign-off at the general manager level. It delineates all facets of the operation, encompassing emergency response arrangements, target animals, ammunition, and firearms. A standard template outlining operation details is used to gather written consent from all landholders prior to commencement.

Other planning elements worth considering include fatigue management of pilots (CASA rules) and shooters, with a limit of six hours in the shooting position per day for shooters. Mapping of operations using accurate geospatial data is pivotal in ensuring that the operation stays on consenting holdings, identifies no-fly and sensitive areas, and hazards.

#### Important take home messages

- Understand the ability of the residual population to recover from aerial control and have a process in place to target them in the future.
- Recognise the capability of aerial shooting and consider multiple passes (over an area) to remove enough of the animals.
- Build capacity in land managers to help themselves.
- Use daily program updates to groups with SMS messaging.
- Provide results at a property scale in a timely manner following control.
- Encourage landholders to remain engaged from one program to the next.

Mal Leeson

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The left page of the FFAST Operations Shoot Plan form. It includes sections for 'Plan Approval (three sign required)' with fields for Name, Signature, and Date for the LLS Region, Program Name, Location, and Target Species. It also has a 'Shooting Plan Overview' section with fields for LLS Region, Program Name, Location, and Target Species. At the bottom, there are checkboxes for 'Mandatory documents' and 'Mandatory equipment'.The right page of the FFAST Operations Shoot Plan form. It includes a 'Base address' section with fields for State, Name, and Locality. It also has a 'Participating Holding' section with fields for Holding No., Occupier, Holding name, and Address. At the bottom, there are sections for 'SITUATION (IMMEDIATE)', 'MISSION (IMMEDIATE)', and 'EXECUTION (IMMEDIATE)'. The form is dated 'FAAST Operations Shoot Plan V1.0 1 June 2022'.

## COMMUNITY DEER CONTROL PROJECT



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## Using cross-tenure engagement to improve effectiveness of aerial culling in South Australia

Myall Tarran - Department of Primary Industries and Regions South Australia (PIRSA)

In vertebrate pest management, cross tenure management is often critical, because pests readily jump property boundaries. Engagement across landholders is crucial. Without it, your program may face fragmented land access, complicating management and reducing cost-efficiency, whether aiming for eradication or control. Target pests can escape control efforts by crossing into neighbouring areas making operational goals unachievable.

To achieve our cross-tenure goal, we used a community driven approach to engage as many landholders as possible. We created partnerships with peak industry bodies (e.g. livestock, conservation), held landholder meetings and encouraged participation by regular phone calls and letters. We also emphasised the benefits of new technology being used. Participation rates were higher when there were visible collaborations between private and public landholders and managers. We are also flexible around landholders' requirements and wishes, be compassionate, as well as thank and congratulate participating landholders.

PIRSA is coordinating two successful cross-tenure eradication programs:

### Kangaroo Island (KI) feral pig eradication post fire program

- 2020 to present
- 890 pigs culled
- 250+ private properties participated, covering ~180,000ha of land.

### The South Australia feral deer eradication program

- 2022 to present
- 11,000 feral deer culled
- 500 private properties participating, covering ~1,500,000ha of land

*“If we only had 50 % of the area signed up for us to access, we would probably need to cull twice as hard and frequently to have the same effect”.*



Pre-cull



Post-cull

We host pre-cull community meetings to provide accurate information and answer questions about the operation.

We also schedule post-cull gatherings and provide timely updates to keep landholders engaged for future culls.

WE WANT YOUR DEER IMPACT PHOTO'S – Do you have a photo that sends a strong message, that we could use in awareness campaigns. Please email: [coordinator@feraldeerplan.org.au](mailto:coordinator@feraldeerplan.org.au)



## COMMUNITY DEER CONTROL PROJECT



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To meet ambitious eradication targets for feral deer (from all of SA) and feral pigs (from KI), a landscape scale approach is required. We need access to more than 80% of the land to ensure we can remove enough pests. That takes a lot of phone calls and follow-ups, but once landholders can see how their involvement can make a difference on a larger scale they generally come on board.

The use of thermal imaging has increased landholders' confidence to participate in the program. Thermal technologies enable helicopters to fly at higher altitudes, which minimises disturbance to livestock and people. Thermal technology also enhances accuracy, efficiency and welfare outcomes.

### Q. What strategies have made the biggest impact to your program?

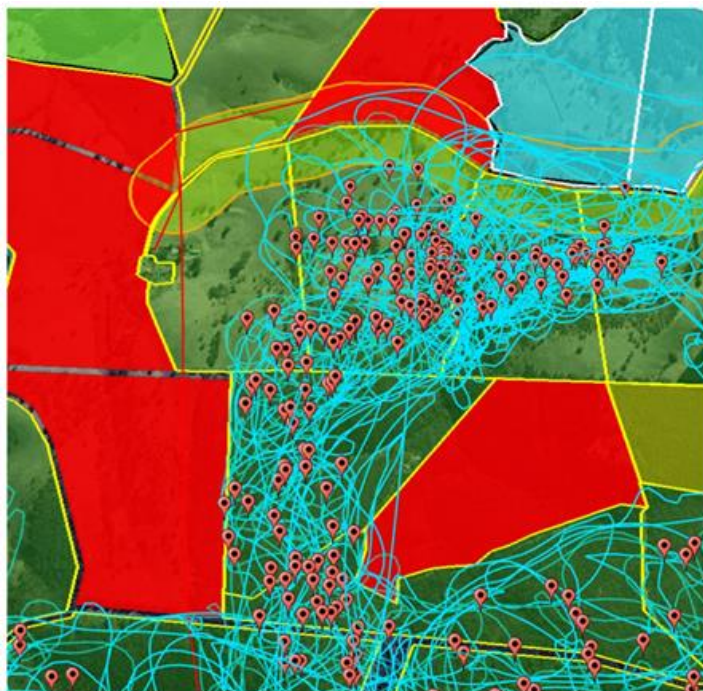
A. Rally lots of partners and work together for a common goal and celebrate our milestones. New technologies have also had a big impact.

### Q. The biggest challenge?

A. Finding ways to achieve higher landholder participation rates than we have in the past.

### Q. What is your golden nugget of advice?

A. Aim high, set a clear target, and then focus on meeting your goal.



#### Myall Tarran

Feral Deer Eradication Coordinator

Biosecurity SA – Invasive Species Unit

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WEBSITE: [PIRSA introduced and pest animals](http://PIRSA.introduced.and.pest.animals)

*“Community liaison takes a lot of effort, but for us, it’s the only way to achieve our goals”*

This map highlights the difficulties of having insufficient access to land. In the map, culling was permitted in the green areas (pins show culled feral deer), and not permitted in the red areas. This means the operation potentially missed opportunities to remove half of the local feral deer population, which were able to harbour in the red areas and breed up.

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Insights from social research on invasive species in Australia

Invasive Species Council

Author: Jack Gough - Insights thanks to Australian Conservation Foundation and Essential Media

The Invasive Species Council presented social research to determine Australians' perceptions of invasive species. It was found that 95% of the surveyed population agrees that it is important to protect nature for future generations to enjoy, but one-third lacks a deep connection with nature. A consistent trend emerged across the research, particularly among female respondents in the 18 to 34 age bracket, who expressed lower awareness and acceptance of the impacts of invasive species and their management. The term "invasive" was found to carry more weight compared to "feral," with 56% of respondents agreeing that invasive species pose one of the most significant threats to our environment, compared to 23% when the term "feral" was used in the same statement.

The study recommended the following tips for raising awareness:

- Use descriptive images to show the spread and impacts of invasive species (ie. An exclusion fence line showing the effect of grazing by invasive herbivores on one side, compared with healthy vegetation on the other).
- Engage people early in the choice between protecting native or invasive species.
- Frame invasive species management as a choice between action and inaction.
- Don't blame the pest for their actions.
- Acknowledge that lethal management is an unfortunate reality required to protect native species and habitats.
- Consider elevating the voices of women or young people to connect more broadly.
- Keep messaging relatable, simple and consistent.
- Some audiences do not respond to economic statistics, the term 'biosecurity', or the use of humour.
- Focus on the positives of removing invasive species from the environment, rather than just numbers culled.
- Build connections and education in the media.
- Have FAQ's ready before messaging is distributed.
- Use supportive external voices, such as farmers, local politicians, scientists, and community groups to reassure the public who have genuine concerns or information gaps.

To what extent do you support or oppose the humane culling of the following invasive species? Base: All participants (n=1,091)						
TOTAL: Support	TOTAL	Gender		Age		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Feral cats	52%	62%	43%	30%	53%	71%
Feral deer	37%	44%	31%	25%	36%	50%
Feral horses	34%	41%	26%	22%	34%	43%
Base (n)	1091	530	561	341	365	385

Jack Gough – Advocacy Director  
Invasive Species Council  
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WEBSITE: <https://invasives.org.au/>

Male respondents and those in the 55+ age bracket are shown to be more supportive of invasive species management practices.



## STAY INFORMED

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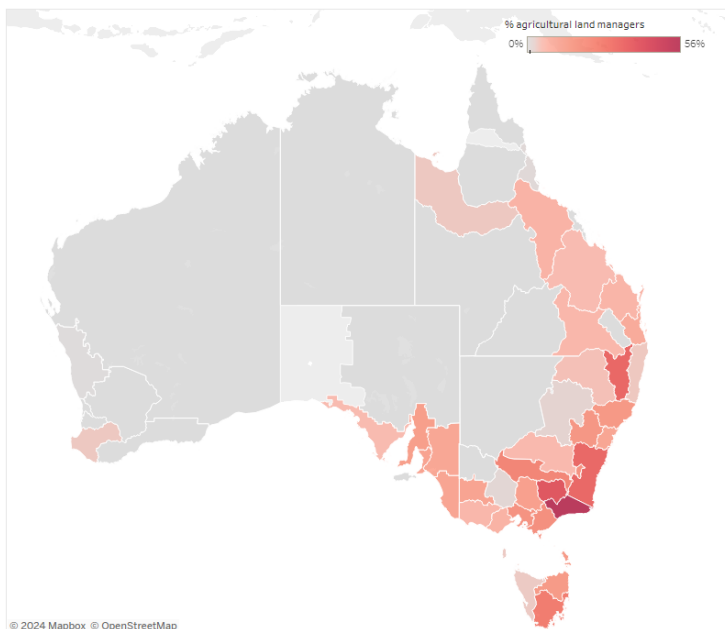
### ABARES – Pest animal and weed management survey

Results from the 2022 ABARES pest animal and weed management land managers survey have now been updated on their dashboard. The data unfortunately highlight the continued spread of deer and increasing numbers. Other survey results indicate there is still a lot of work to be done to reign in the spread of feral deer:

- Mean financial expenditure per property on feral deer management was \$2,018
- Average days of effort spent on feral deer control decreased from 23 days in 2016 to 15 days in 2019 and down to 9 days a year in 2022.
- 9% of land managers rated pest management activities as effective, 14% a little effective and 77% reporting not effective or unsure.

The map below indicates the distribution and proportion of land managers reporting problems (major or minor) with feral deer on their property in the past 12 months.

[Access the ABARES pest animal and weed management survey HERE](#)



Sample numbers are insufficient for NRM regions of Cooperative Management Area (QLD) and Alinyjara Wilurara (SA) so these estimates are not presented at a regional level. Sample numbers for Cape York (QLD) were low in all survey waves and estimates for Cape York should be used with caution. In 2016 and 2019, no data was sampled from the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) or external territory natural resource management regions. However, ACT NRM region was adequately sampled in 2022. Greyed out regions with no tooltip indicate low response counts (<10 sample points) and therefore the data is not provided at the NRM regional scale. Reports about the presence of pest animals in this survey series have not been verified by official sources. They should be checked against secondary sources before relying upon these reports, particularly when there are only a small number of reports.

**Share your  
feral deer  
program or  
community  
engagement  
success story!**



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