

Have a whine about swine

By Su Wild-River

I suggested this article, but I feel pretty scared about writing it all the same. Because one thing I've learned in five months as the Temporary Landcare Support Officer, is that pigs are contentious here. Feral pigs that is, not the cute, clever, delicious ones we breed and raise to eat. Those ones are trouble, but at least there's some value to them. No, I'm talking about feral pigs. The sort that make you weep by ploughing up acres of soil and pasture in a single night.



As far as I can tell, no-one doubts their destructiveness. No-one wants feral pigs in their back yard or fields. The big questions are: Is the problem getting worse? What caused it to do so? And what's the best way to beat the curly tailed curse? I've listed some of the different ideas I've heard around the district, and read about in reports below. You can see why it's not easy to be on the receiving end of these comments.

So for the rest of the article, I'll share some of the published research from around NSW. The sort of information that most people agree on.

First, one of the reasons pigs are such a problem, and perhaps getting worse quickly is that they breed like—well, like pigs. Feral pig populations can double in size annually. So control campaigns need to be highly effective to have an impact. This also means that monitoring to understand a population is important for a coordinated effort.

Control options

Poisoning and trapping both require free-feeding first to attract pig activity before setting out to kill the pigs. 'HogHoppers' are available to ensure that baits are targeted to pigs, but I've been told that the pigs avoid them and

putting free feed on the ground seems to work better. Once you have pig activity at the free feeding site, its time to set the bait or trap. Baits laced with 1080 grain will poison the pigs, but they can also kill native, non-target animals. You need a licence to lay the baits and can contact South East Local Land Services for training or to renew your licence. Traps need regular checking, but are also quite flexible because you can move them around fairly easily. When you trap pigs, you still need to kill them, so people without guns will need help to clear out the traps.

Another thing to know is that South East Local Land Services can help. They have some traps available that you can use on your property to catch pigs. They'll advise you in how to set up a free baiting program.

For my own part, I've heard so many people whining about swine that I think it's time to get the coordination going. Upper Shoalhaven Landcare Council is inviting all of you to share your stories about feral pigs so that we can start to work together to tackle the problem.

You can leave comments on our website at: <http://www.uppershoalhavenlandcare.com.au/44-2/whine-about-swine/>, or email us on upper.shoalhaven@gmail.com

For practical help, contact South East Local Land Services on 48422536.

We'd love to hear from you.

Some say	Others say
Pigs are worse this year than ever before	They were worse before, and not so bad now
Shooting is the only way to clear them. For dense populations, shooting from helicopters is the first step.	Shooting them breaks up the families, and then stay start new ones. It makes the problem worse.
Dogging can make ground shooting campaigns more successful, especially in dense habitat. Dogs can help find and kill residual pigs after populations are reduced.	Pig dogs also break up the families and stimulates young boars to start breeding. The dogs keep doing this when they escape and keep on hunting.
Traps don't work.	National Parks and Wildlife Service established 6 traps in this region, and caught 55 pigs from March to June. That's more than 70 now for the year.
Different strategies work in different places.	Coordination is the key