

## **Feral Pigs**

Feral pigs in Western Australia are descendents of domestic pigs intentionally or accidentally released into the wild. Domestic pigs are still released into the wild today, while feral pigs are captured and released into new areas by some irresponsible hunters.

Feral pigs occur throughout the jarrah forest areas of the south-west of Western Australia. They are also found in the coastal mid-west and along the river systems of the Kimberley in the north.

Feral pigs normally breed once per year although they are probably capable of breeding twice where very good conditions prevail. The gestation period is 114 days and an average of five young are born although survival of young pigs is often low due to predation and lack of food and water.

Feral pigs have a wide diet and will consume mammals, carrion, eggs, worms, insects, frogs, reptiles and predation of lambs by feral pigs is commonly reported in some areas.

Feral pigs damage fences and water supplies, and cause significant losses by rooting up pasture and trampling crops. Feral pigs also cause damage to natural ecosystems by reducing ground cover causing erosion and changing plant structures. They are potential carriers of many diseases.

Feral pigs are controlled in Western Australia by hunting, trapping and poisoning. While many pigs are controlled by hunting, there is opposition to the hunting of feral pigs using dogs on animal welfare grounds. Hunting can also disperse mobs of pigs making effective control difficult. Trapping is an effective means of feral pig control although it can be labour intensive. Poisoning can be the most effective means of feral pig control but it needs careful consideration and planning to ensure it is conducted to achieve maximum results without risk to native and domestic animals.

