



INTEGRATED FERAL PIG MANAGEMENT

Pigs will not ever be eradicated from Australia, so our only option is on-going control. In the next few minutes I will talk to you about some options for feral pig control and some tips to make your efforts successful.

Feral Pig Ecology

Firstly, Pigs are intelligent adaptive and secretive animals. They are nocturnal or crepuscular, and camp up during the day in thickets. They live in groups, usually several sows and many young of various ages up to 18 months old, or adolescent males although constant control pressure has a disruptive effect on these groups and rarely do you see a full structured mob in this close country. Boars live singularly but may trail a group of sows following the scent. They usually spend time within range of a food source or waterhole.

They have a high reproduction rate. Between 5 and 10 piglets twice a year. There will have to be an 80% reduction rate over 2 generations to have a significant effect on the pig population in a region.

They are clever omnivores. They eat everything that we would eat and more.

- Fruit; rainforest berries, palm berries, and exotic fruit.
- Tubers; ground orchid bulbs, lily bulbs, swamp boogooroo, nutgrass nuts.
- Edible plant material, banana stems, sugar cane stems, herbs and vines.
- But need protein such as small animals; frogs, skinks, birds eggs, turtle eggs and young, earthworms and scarab larvae, road kill and other dead animals.

This makes them difficult to attract with baits because there are so many alternatives. You must use a bait that they are attracted to.

They have an incredible sense of smell. They can smell you in your garden 1km away. They can sniff out burrowing frogs under 50cm of sand, and a sow on heat from 3 kms.

They have good hearing. Many a mob has been spooked by the sound of a rifle being cocked at 100m.

But they have poor eyesight, and it is easy to creep up on a mob from downwind. I have stood still while a mob of pigs ambled past me and didn't realise I was there until they smelt me.

They have a large home range, 2-50 sq kms, and this must include a food source and water. Control will have to be over this large area to have any lasting effect.

Integrated pest management is defined as using many different techniques to control or reduce pest predation on produce or crop and the environment. The different techniques commonly used against feral pigs are

- Fencing
- Trapping
- Baiting, 1080 or strychnine
- Hunting, ground or aerial

Fencing is the most effective and most expensive way of preventing pig damage to a crop or garden. The most expensive fences are the most effective. Electrifying a fence increases its effectiveness, but if a pig knows there is food in there it will get in over under round or through. Short sections of fence can be used to direct pigs into a trap, as can slashed lines in long grass or a smell trail leading to a trap, or even just freshly turned earth.

Trapping is the most effective method on small properties where there are no open spaces and the occasional pig. Trapping is most effective in times of food scarcity. There are numerous trap designs but they all incorporate the following design elements. The mesh must be at least 1.8m high, must have a mesh of less than 10cm, must be firmly attached to the ground by pegs or star picket. And the door must allow pigs in but not out. And they must be pig specific, not trapping cassowaries, wallabies and the neighbours dogs. The lifting bar trigger works best for pigs. If you have cassowaries use a piece of string at the entrance. I have seen many designs both commercial and bush built, if you want advice come and see me afterwards.

Always pre feed and get them eating before moving the trap on site. The type of baits to use are unlimited but the best bait is some of whatever they are eating at the time and have just run out of. I know people who put tubs of mangos in the freezer, and bring them out about a week after mango season. Pigs like humans love mangos and they are used to feeding on mangos and when there are none left on the wild they will come to the smell of mangos. If they are into your melon patch, use old cut melons, or bananas in banana country. Use your compost heap as a bait with food scraps and other tasty stuff. Build your trap around the heap and set the gate when they are eating every night. Don't forget that if you have a constant place of feeding there will be worms as well. Pigs love worms.

Encourage them into your garden by free feeding and be friendly to them, but ring up and order the trap for when they are there regularly.

Most pigs cannot resist fermented grain and/or molasses. Sprinkle a bit round to entice them in and keep up supply until they can be trapped.

Once pigs are eating, move the trap in after a few days. Allow free feeding around and in the trap for about a week before setting it. If possible wait until all the pigs are feeding in the trap

Suspend all other pig control activity during trapping as the pigs are easily spooked, and they should be as comfortable as possible round the trapping area.

Do not spend lots of time around the trapping area and visit it as little as possible. Leave as little scent as possible.

Always check your trap early in the morning. A pig left in a trap without shade and water will perish on a hot day, and will repeatedly ram the mesh fence to get out causing itself horrendous facial damage. Supply water and shade or destroy the pig early in the morning. If you know you can't make it early the next day, tie the gate back and free feed that night.

Hint: spread sand or loose dirt around your feeding and trapping area and keep it raked. Watch for tracks to work out number of pigs and their size.

Baiting is best in remote areas with large numbers of pigs and little human contact. You must be no closer than 2kms from your nearest neighbour and must notify them when you are baiting. Baiting is highly regulated activity by DPI or your local Council Officer. There are now 3 commonly used chemicals for pig baiting.

Warfarin, an anticoagulant, Phosphorus based poisons such as SAP have been used in the past but the use has been discontinued due to animal welfare concerns.

1080 is a naturally occurring compound in Australia so all native animals are resistant to 1080 in the concentrations used for dogs and pigs. 6 times more to kill a pig than for a dog. 1080 pig baits are only available to the public in prepared bait form, usually meat pieces free from fat, skin and bone, and is injected with 1080 by the Council Pest Officer. It is also a good idea to bury pig baits. This makes it unavailable to an off target species and pigs will find the buried bait by smell.

You can also use fruit or grain but only in close consultation with Council Officers. If you use fruit or grain, the poisoned baits must include a green dye to make it unattractive to other animals or birds.

Pig baits called PIGOUT contain 1080 and are pre-packaged from Animal Control Technologies, available through rural suppliers.

New technology pig bait *HOG-GONE*[®] is sodium nitrite, a common human food additive, which is highly toxic to pigs, maybe also to humans..... A recent introduction to the arsenal is the Hog Hopper, a pig specific feeding station.

Strychnine is available from your chemist but you must have a permit issued by the QLD Health Dept. Strychnine will kill pigs and dogs as well as birds of prey, qualls and domestic cats, goannas, snakes and everything that comes in contact with the bait or the subsequent dead animal. I do not recommend strychnine for pig baiting.

I know Sid and Scott and Andrew will have more to say on baits later

Hunting on foot with a rifle is usually the most ineffective method of pig control. One shot, you may get one pig, two if you have a semi or automatic rifle but all other pigs will scatter, usually just moving them on to another patch for a while.

Good hunters on quads in open country may chase down a mob and kill a few. I know a few members of SSA who do this as a service to graziers.

Helicopter hunting is very effective in open country such as swamps treeless plains and broadacre crops. As it is very expensive to hire choppers, check to see if it is cost effective.

Bow hunters have a reasonable success rate as they are quiet and can trail a mob and get most of them.

Dogs are good for flushing out pigs from dense vegetation but again usually only get one pig and the rest scatter.

Integrated Pest Management is using many and/or the most appropriate methods to control pigs and reduce damage.

If you are a large cropper on large acreage, it may be cost effective to use helicopter to heavily reduce numbers, and baiting to mop up the last few. If your damage is severe and costly, it may be cost effective to fence.

But if you have a small block with one or 2 wandering into your, fencing is cost effective but trapping may be your answer and maybe even a hunter with a dog to get that last trap-shy boar living in the gully.

If you live on the edge of a National Park where pigs come out constantly, a permanent pig trap is your answer, of course always with fresh bait, regularly monitored and only set when there is recent activity. If you are the Ranger of a National Park, your best option is baiting from Hog Hopper.

So use the most appropriate method for your situation.

And lastly, it is not the pigs fault!! They did not choose that life of a hunted feral and do not deserve cruelty or a painful death. Be humane in all your dealings with pigs. Do not use the Mexican Heart Shot. It only kills in 10% of cases.

HELP FERAL PIGS GO

TO

HOG HEAVEN

SAT 15 NOV | WORKSHOP | MT MOLLOY

FREE!

Got problems with feral porkers?
In this workshop you'll learn about pig
behaviour, how to toughen up your
property, and the pros & cons of various
control methods (including trapping)

Local Legends Sid Clayton + Peter Alden + more (TBC)

Launch of our new mobile pig trap

Venue courtesy of
Peter & Heather Brown at Anabranch
(old Smelter site, west end of Santowski Cresc)

09:30
be prompt

Bring a hat, drink, and chair

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