

# Feral Pigs

Feral pigs (*Sus scrofa*) were introduced to Australia on the first fleet in 1788. They are highly destructive invasive animals that cause significant damage to agriculture, the environment, and cultural sites.



Feral pigs (*Sus scrofa*) are one of Australia’s most destructive invasive animals. Their small but growing populations pose serious threats to the environment, agriculture, biosecurity, and cultural heritage sites.

Declared for control under the **Landscape South Australia Act 2019**, feral pigs must be destroyed, and they must not be moved, sold, kept, or released. Early intervention is critical, as established populations become extremely costly to eradicate.

This fact sheet provides an overview of feral pigs’ ecology, impacts, and the responsibilities of land managers across the state.

## Where do they live?

Feral pigs live in a variety of South Australian ecosystems, including mallee woodlands, chenopod shrublands, river floodplains, and wetlands such as those along the Murray-

Darling Basin and in the South-East. They thrive in areas with permanent water sources and dense cover, especially in wetlands and riparian zones where their rooting and wallowing cause serious erosion and degradation of native vegetation and habitat. These ecosystems are particularly vulnerable to their impacts due to the fragile soils and the presence of threatened species .

## What is their impact?

Feral pigs cause extensive damage across environmental, agricultural, and cultural landscapes. In agriculture, they compete with livestock for feed and water, destroy fences, damage crops, and prey on lambs and young animals.

They are also known to spread plant diseases and invasive weeds, adding to the financial burden on landholders

Their digging and wallowing lead to soil erosion, loss of native vegetation, destruction of wetlands, and reduced water quality. They threaten biodiversity by preying on native fauna and damaging culturally significant bush foods.

Feral pigs pose serious biosecurity and health risks, with the potential to spread diseases such as Foot and Mouth Disease, which could devastate livestock industries and endanger public health. Where feral pig populations are high, the damage can be severe, widespread, and long-lasting.

## What are your responsibilities?

Under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*, all landowners and occupiers are legally required to manage feral pigs. This includes destroying pigs found on their properties and reporting detections to their regional Landscape Board.

It is illegal to move, possess, sell, or release feral pigs, and sightings of escaped domestic pigs must also be reported, as they are considered feral once uncontained. Land managers must ensure all control operations are conducted humanely, in accordance with the *Animal Welfare Act 1985*. Domestic pig owners must be registered, maintain secure enclosures, and follow all regulatory directions to prevent escape and minimise the risk of contributing to feral pig populations.

## Ecology

Feral pigs are highly adaptable and prolific breeders. A single female can produce up to two litters per year, with each litter ranging from four to 10 piglets. They thrive in a variety of environments, particularly those with access to water, and their movements are largely dictated by food availability and seasonal conditions.

Without consistent and coordinated control,

their numbers can increase rapidly, damaging wide areas. In some regions, such as the Chowilla Floodplain and the North-East Pastoral zone, complete eradication is unachievable due to regular reinvasion from interstate populations, making long-term management essential.

## What are the options?

Effective feral pig management requires a strategic, multi-pronged approach. **Early detection** and rapid response are essential to prevent small populations from becoming established, while coordinated control efforts – such as trapping, aerial and ground culling, and baiting - are most effective when undertaken at a district scale.

Containing domestic pigs through strict husbandry reduces the risk of supplementation of feral populations. Ongoing success also depends on community cooperation, with landholders working together and supported by Landscape Boards and regional programs.

Compliance with legal requirements under the *Landscape SA Act 2019* and prompt reporting of sightings and activity help ensure long-term control.

It's important to note that while trained hunting dogs may be used to flush pigs during control operations, injuring or killing pigs with dogs is illegal under the *Animal Welfare Act 1985*.

## More information

Email: [saal.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au](mailto:saal.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au)  
Phone: 08 8429 9666

[www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal](http://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal)