



# Managing Feral Pigs to Protect Brigalow Ecosystems

Protecting productivity.  
Preserving threatened species.  
Supporting coordinated action.

*Feral pigs cause widespread damage to agricultural land and sensitive Brigalow ecosystems.*



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### Importance of Controlling Pest Animals

Feral pigs are one of the most significant and persistent threats to agricultural productivity and Brigalow Belt Threatened Ecological Communities (TECs) in Southern Queensland. Effective pest animal management is critical to safeguarding both farming systems and ecological values across the landscape.

Feral pigs (*Sus scrofa*) pose a substantial risk through both direct and indirect impacts. These include direct damage to cropping enterprises and indirect degradation of grazing landscapes through soil disturbance, reduced ground cover, and damage to pasture systems. These impacts limit the ability of landholders to implement best-practice grazing management,

including rotational strategies that are essential for reducing pressure on TECs.

Despite ongoing and coordinated control efforts, feral pig populations remain highly resilient and continue to expand under favourable conditions. Without sustained and enhanced intervention, pest impacts will intensify, exacerbating agricultural losses while accelerating the decline of already vulnerable ecological communities.

Strengthening pest control practices, supported by targeted education and awareness materials, will be essential to drive landholder behaviour change, improve adoption of integrated control methods, and achieve measurable reductions in pest pressure across the Brigalow Belt Priority Place.

#### KEY PROJECT FACTS



>100,000 hectares treated in coordinated aerial pest shoots between June 2025 and June 2026



~5,000 pigs removed



Rapid reproduction of feral pigs:  
3 months, 3 weeks, 3 days



Extensive distribution across Queensland landscapes



## Contributing Factors to the 'Pig Problem'

Despite ongoing control efforts, feral pig populations continue to expand across Southern Queensland due to a combination of biological, environmental, and landscape-scale factors.

A key driver of the feral pig problem is their high reproductive capacity, with a gestation period of approximately 3 months, 3 weeks, and 3 days. This enables rapid population growth and recovery following control activities, meaning isolated or short-term interventions are typically insufficient to achieve sustained reductions. Sows can reach sexual maturity as early as six months of age and produce litters of up to 10 piglets, often twice per year. As a result, populations can increase rapidly through reproduction alone, even before accounting for favourable environmental conditions that further enhance survival and breeding success. Consequently, control efforts that are not sustained and coordinated across the landscape struggle to keep pace with population growth driven by these reproductive dynamics.

The scale of the challenge is further intensified by the extensive distribution of feral pigs, with the vast majority of the estimated 3.2 million population concentrated in Queensland.

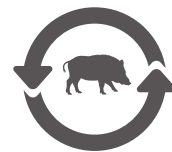
This broad geographic spread limits the effectiveness of fragmented control efforts and reinforces the need for coordinated, cross-tenure management approaches.

Feral pigs also present a significant biosecurity risk as vectors of transmissible diseases, including exotic threats such as Foot-and-Mouth Disease. This extends their impact beyond agricultural productivity, posing material risks to national markets, regional economies, and biodiversity.

Five consecutive years of high rainfall (from 2020 to 2025) have provided favourable environmental conditions and have further accelerated population growth by increasing breeding success and survival rates. In these optimal conditions, feral pig populations can increase by up to 86% annually. Reliable water availability, limited natural predation, and a high level of adaptability enable feral pigs to persist and expand across diverse landscapes, including sensitive ecological areas such as Brigalow TECs.

Long-term reduction in feral pig impacts requires coordinated, landscape-scale intervention rather than isolated control efforts. Effective monitoring is also required to inform effective intervention efforts.

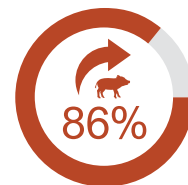
### KEY FERAL PIG FACTS



Reproduction cycle  
(3 months, 3 weeks and  
3 days gestation)



Sows reach sexual maturity  
at 6 months of age



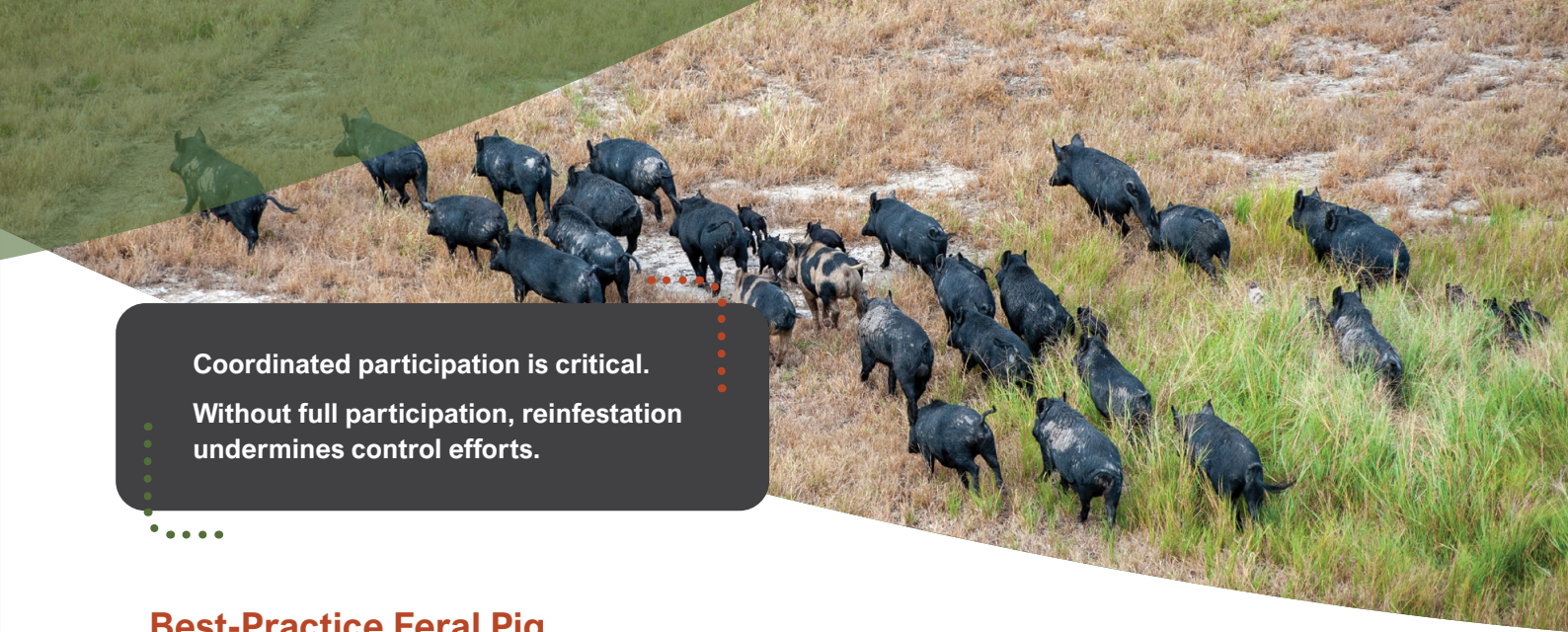
Feral pig populations  
increase by up to  
86% annually



Litter size can be  
up to 10 piglets  
as often as twice  
per sow per year



Biological and  
environmental factors  
combine to drive rapid population  
growth and landscape impacts.



**Coordinated participation is critical.**  
**Without full participation, reinfestation undermines control efforts.**

## Best-Practice Feral Pig Management

**Effective control depends on the consistent adoption of coordinated, best-practice approaches across the landscape.**

### CORE PRINCIPLES

- Coordinated action across neighbouring properties
- Integrated control methods (aerial control, trapping, baiting, ground shooting)
- Timely intervention following favourable breeding conditions
- Ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up

## Population recovery observed after control

- Demonstrates resilience of feral pigs
- Reinforces need for ongoing, coordinated monitoring and management

Control programs were deliberately delivered across connected landscapes, including private properties, forestry interfaces, National Parks, and key waterways acting as movement corridors within priority places.

This approach demonstrated that fragmented control efforts are insufficient, as pigs readily disperse from untreated properties into areas that have undergone control, rapidly undermining the effectiveness of those efforts. Effective management therefore depends on a coordinated, cross-tenure “all-in” approach, where immediately adjacent properties participate simultaneously to prevent reinvasion from untreated areas.

### KEY RISK OF UNCOORDINATED CONTROL

**Control efforts in isolation are quickly negated when pigs disperse from neighbouring untreated properties.**

## Q CASE STUDY

### Coordinated Control in Action

Southern Queensland Landscapes has delivered significant, coordinated pest management activities to reduce threats to Brigalow Belt TECs and associated threatened species. These efforts demonstrate both the scale of the challenge and the critical importance of sustained, landscape-level intervention.

Across the Murray–Darling Basin, more than 100,000 hectares were treated through a series of four coordinated aerial control campaigns. These operations resulted in the removal of more than 5,000 feral pigs.

However, ongoing monitoring identified increases in pig numbers relative to initial observations. This highlights the combined influence of favourable seasonal conditions and high reproductive capacity, enabling rapid population recovery even after intensive control efforts. These outcomes demonstrate a clear shift from opportunistic or isolated control toward coordinated, proactive pest management practices across participating properties. Landholders indicated a greater willingness to align timing, methods, and participation with neighbouring properties to maximise control effectiveness and reduce reinfestation risk.



## Benefits of Pest Control on Brigalow Threatened Species

Effective pest control delivers substantial outcomes for the protection and recovery of Brigalow Belt TECs and their associated species.

Reducing feral pig populations minimises direct impacts such as predation on native fauna, destruction of ground-nesting sites, and soil disturbance. This supports improved survival and recovery outcomes for threatened species that depend on intact ground cover and stable habitat conditions.

Feral pig activity degrades habitat through rooting and wallowing, disrupting soil structure, reducing vegetation cover, and promoting weed invasion. Control efforts help maintain vegetation integrity, support natural regeneration, and preserve critical habitat across Brigalow ecosystems.

Pest control also contributes to improved water quality and reduced erosion, particularly in riparian zones that function as key biodiversity corridors across priority places.

### 100% LANDHOLDER RE-ENGAGEMENT IN FOLLOW-UP PROGRAMS

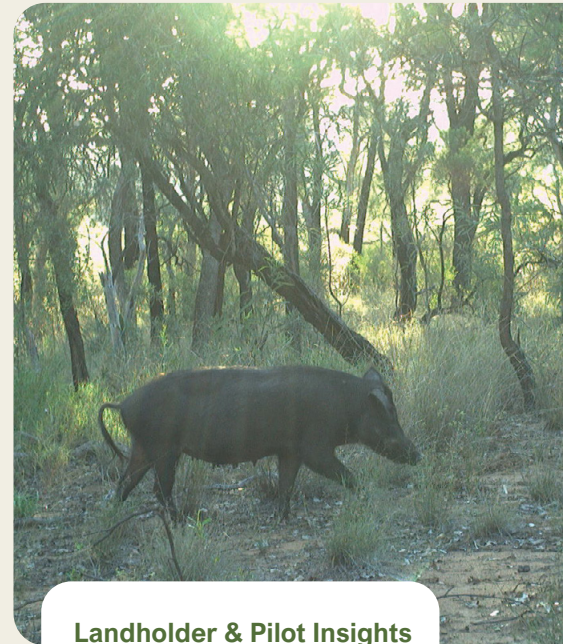
- Strong evidence of behaviour change
- High confidence in program acceptance and effectiveness

## Importance of Attitudinal and Practice Change

Achieving long-term reductions in feral pig impacts relies not only on control activities, but on sustained attitudinal and practice change among landholders and land managers.

Given the species' capacity for rapid population recovery and broad distribution, one-off or reactive control efforts are insufficient to deliver enduring outcomes. Instead, consistent adoption of coordinated, best-practice management approaches is required.

Attitudinal change reinforces shared responsibility and strengthens commitment to coordinated action, while practice change ensures this translates into on-ground outcomes - through timely intervention, participation in coordinated programs, and adoption of integrated control methods.



### Landholder & Pilot Insights

*"Pig numbers are indicative of a major infestation, with large mobs moving across grazing paddocks."*

**Pilot – undertaking aerial pest control**

*"Coordinated control is critical – without an "all-in" approach, progress is quickly lost."*

**Landowner & Manager in Border Rivers Region**

*"The problem remains severe, but these programs are making a difference."*

**Landowner & Manager in Murray-Darling Basin**



### Protecting Brigalow ecosystems requires sustained, coordinated action.

By working together and adopting best-practice pest management, landholders can reduce pest impacts, improve agricultural productivity, and support the long-term recovery of threatened ecological communities.



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