



Tackling feral cats

We need to focus our efforts if we are to bring our threatened animals and plants back from the brink. The Australian Government's Threatened Species Strategy identifies tackling feral cats as its top priority for action.

The Mammal Action Plan 2012 and a report published in 2014 by the US National Academy of Sciences (Woinarski et al) ranked feral cats as the highest threat to Australia's mammals. Their threat factor was more than double that of red foxes, the next highest threat, and triple that of habitat loss and fragmentation.

Feral cats have contributed to the extinction of at least 28 mammal species since they first arrived in Australia, and they continue to wreak havoc. They imperil around a third of our threatened mammals, reptiles, frogs and birds. We need new tools, approaches and partnerships to limit their impact.



Photo: Fredy Mercure

Applying best practice feral cat and fox baiting—WA

The integration of Eradicat® feral cat baiting with existing Pro bait® fox baiting activity will help protect threatened species across more than 850 000 hectares of conservation areas, including the northern jarrah forest, midwest semi-arid zone, wandoo woodland and south coast regions. The project will use trapping and remote cameras to monitor the effectiveness of the baits and their impact on non-target species. Threatened species, including the endangered woylie and the vulnerable western ringtail possum, black-flanked rock-wallaby and numbat, will be relocated to areas where baiting has reduced feral predator numbers. The project will also help the endangered mala, the critically endangered Gilbert's potoroo, western ground parrot and western swamp tortoise as well as the vulnerable greater bilby, western quoll, quokka and noisy scrub-bird.

Funding

\$1.7 million

Partner

WA Government

Trialling a new feral cat bait in the Kimberley—WA

A new hybrid feral cat bait, Curiosity® 1080, has been developed to reduce impacts on northern quolls and will be trialled in the Kimberley region. The trial will determine how effective the hybrid bait is in controlling feral cats and check for any impacts on non-target species. It will use remote cameras as well as collared feral cats and northern quolls to monitor results. Local Indigenous rangers will also be trained in feral cat management and monitoring techniques. The project will help the endangered woylie and the vulnerable black-flanked rock-wallaby, western ringtail possum and numbat.

Funding

\$250 000

Partner

WA Government

Developing a grooming trap for feral cats—SA

The feral cat grooming trap uses sensors to detect the presence of a feral cat and sprays toxic gel onto the fur of the animal. The feral cat instinctively grooms the gel from its body and ingests a lethal dose of poison. The technology has been tested in the lab, and now field trials in Flinders Ranges National Park are planned to test its durability and reliability. The project will support further work designing and manufacturing the technology, and securing permits for its use. Once proven, the technology will protect a wide range of other species at risk of feral cats, including the endangered woylie, night parrot and bridled nail-tail wallaby and the vulnerable greater bilby and black-footed rock-wallaby. Within the Flinders Ranges, the vulnerable western quoll and yellow-footed rock-wallaby will benefit from the planned field trials.

Funding

\$100 000

Partners

Ecological Horizons Pty. Ltd., SA Government and the University of SA

Deploying dogs to detect feral cats and foxes—NSW

Two dogs will be trained to detect feral cats and foxes that threaten the endangered mountain pygmy-possum and smoky mouse or konoom in Kosciuszko National Park. A new, full-time pest control officer will trap and cull the feral cats and foxes once found. Two threatened species officers also will be trained to handle the dogs, allowing them to detect the pests and locate the mountain pygmy-possum and konoom.

Funding

\$140 000

Partner

NSW Government

Trialling a national Feral CatScan app—SA

The national feral cat mapping system, Feral CatScan, aims to record and centralise real-time information about feral cat activity and impacts on native species. As part of its development, Feral CatScan will be trialled on Kangaroo Island ahead of its national rollout. Feral CatScan will be available for free download on iPhone and Android devices. It will use the power of citizen science to help protect our native wildlife.

Funding

\$45 000

Partners

Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre and NSW Government

Protecting biodiversity on Groote Eylandt—NT

Grootye Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria is home to at least 900 plant and 330 vertebrate species and provides refuge for many threatened species in northern Australia. This project will improve understanding of threats to biodiversity on the island and test the use of poison baits for feral cat control. Extensive monitoring of the island's threatened species and feral cat population will contribute to a new, long-term management plan for the island. The project will help the endangered northern quoll and the vulnerable brush-tailed rabbit -rat and northern hopping-mouse.

Funding

\$235 000

Partner

NT Government

Protecting the central rock-rat in the West MacDonnell Ranges—NT

This intervention will pilot an aerial baiting programme to control feral cats in and around the mammal refuge areas of the West MacDonnell Ranges. Eradicat® baits will be dropped by helicopter and camera traps will monitor the number of feral cats and the species they prey on. The results will indicate how effectively this approach protects the endangered central rock-rat and other small mammals in the area. The project will also collect valuable information about the location and density of several threatened species, such as the vulnerable black-footed rock-wallaby, and threats posed to them by feral cats.

Funding

\$220 000

Partner

NT Government

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