

Summary Abstracts

That Feral Cat Bait

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Predation by feral cats is recognized as a significant threat to fauna conservation in Australia. Not only do feral cats prey on native fauna and have the potential to spread diseases but also they have proven to be an obstacle to fauna reintroduction programs. As a consequence of these impacts, a feral cat control research program was initiated by the Western Australian Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) under the umbrella program "Western Shield". Baiting is recognised as the most effective method for controlling feral cats when there is no risk posed to non-target species.

Prior to commencement of this research, baiting programs for feral cats had been ineffective principally because baits used were for other introduced predators such as foxes and wild dogs and were unattractive to cats. DEC researchers conducted an extensive series of trials in an endeavour to develop a bait medium that was palatable to feral cats and capable of carrying a toxin. The baits had to be relatively easily and cheaply manufactured and would stay intact when distributed from an aircraft over broad-scale areas. These trials have led to the development of the feral cat bait known as 'Eradicat[®]'.

Baiting campaigns using Eradicat[®] have proven to be an effective method in reducing feral cat numbers and it is now used as a control tool for feral cat management at a number of mainland sites in arid and semi-arid regions. A recent project has gone a long way to demonstrating that the sustained control of introduced predators (both feral cats and foxes) in the southern rangelands can also be achieved using this bait. Baiting campaigns using Eradicat[®] have also been used effectively to eradicate feral cats from several islands, including Hermite Island in the Montebellos and Faure Island in Shark Bay. Following feral cat eradication successful translocation of a number of native species to these islands has occurred. A feral cat eradication campaign is being planned for Dirk Hartog Island, the largest island off the Western Australian coast. The Dirk Hartog project would become the largest feral cat eradication campaign attempted on an island globally. The island could potentially support one of the most diverse native mammal assemblages in Australia following successful eradication of feral cats and contribute significantly to the long-term conservation of several threatened species.

If further fauna declines are to be averted and re-introductions are to succeed, integrated management programs, which address threats, must be implemented. Effective control strategies for feral cats must be an integral component of these management programs. DEC researchers are developing feral cat control techniques and strategies that address these concerns.

Threatened Species Research Forum



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A Review of WA Government Research into Threatened Species