

RECENTLY CALM and RAGWEST trapped 12 pigs in Birdwhistle Nature Reserve, near Narrogin. It seems they were deliberately put there, perhaps so that somebody could hunt them later on. There is evidence that pigs have also been put into other forests and reserves in the area. This is incredibly silly ...

In Western Australia feral pigs are found in low numbers in the forest country of the South West, in agricultural areas north of Geraldton and in the Kimberley region.

It appears feral pig populations are spreading, with reports indicating that this is possibly due to deliberate releases for hunting. Moving and releasing pigs for hunting is extremely irresponsible and can result in many problems for local communities.

Feral pigs:

- ◆ disturb the soil by digging for roots causing erosion, reduction in ground cover and weed invasion;

FERAL ALERT

Feral Pig Problems

by Marion Massam



- ◆ feed on and destroy native plants and animals, and increase competition with native animals;
- ◆ feed on crops and livestock causing damage by rooting and trampling;
- ◆ harbour and spread diseases and parasites.

Diseases spread by feral pigs may include jarrah dieback, tuberculosis and tapeworm parasites. Pigs could also spread exotic diseases if they were introduced to WA, including anthrax, foot and mouth disease, African swine fever, rinderpest and rabies. These diseases would be

difficult to eradicate and their presence would have immediate and drastic effects on the State's livestock industries. There would be immediate losses of key export markets until eradication of the diseases could be achieved.

Control of feral pigs is difficult. In Western Australia, poisoning (by staff from AGWEST) and trapping are the most effective techniques. Hunting is not an efficient method for control of feral pigs and can only be considered a recreational activity.

Anyone moving feral pigs for hunting purposes, particularly into areas previously free of the animals, should seriously consider the potential consequences of this action.

Marion Massam works at AGWEST's 'Vertebrate Pest Research Services'. She can be contacted on 9366 2301.

If you come across information that would in any way curtail the introduction of feral pigs, please ring your nearest CALM office.