National Feral Cat and Fox Management Coordination

National Vertebrate Pest Management Report Card (2026)

Feral cats

1. National Snapshot

Feral cats are among Australia's most damaging invasive predators, contributing to native species decline and extinction across Australia. Each year feral cats are estimated to kill more than 1.5 billion native animals and endanger over 200 nationally listed threatened species, and 37 listed migratory birds (DCCEW 2024). Feral cats also pose disease risks through transmission of toxoplasmosis, which can affect wildlife, livestock and humans, creating significant environmental and biosecurity challenges.

Feral cats are distributed across almost all of mainland Australia and many offshore islands. They occur in a wide range of environments, from deserts and grasslands to forests, alpine regions and coastal areas. Feral cats are highly adaptable and occur in both remote and urban landscapes. Their widespread distribution across such diverse environments presents a significant risk to biodiversity and biosecurity challenge.

Over the past five years, feral cat distribution, abundance and associated impacts remained largely unchanged across Australia. However, increased abundance and environmental impacts were reported in Tasmania and some Queensland local government areas.

Across Australia, feral cat management primarily focuses on protecting native wildlife particularly threatened and endangered species. Protection of livestock from risk of disease such as toxoplasmosis remains an important driver of feral cat management in rural areas and southern states of Australia.

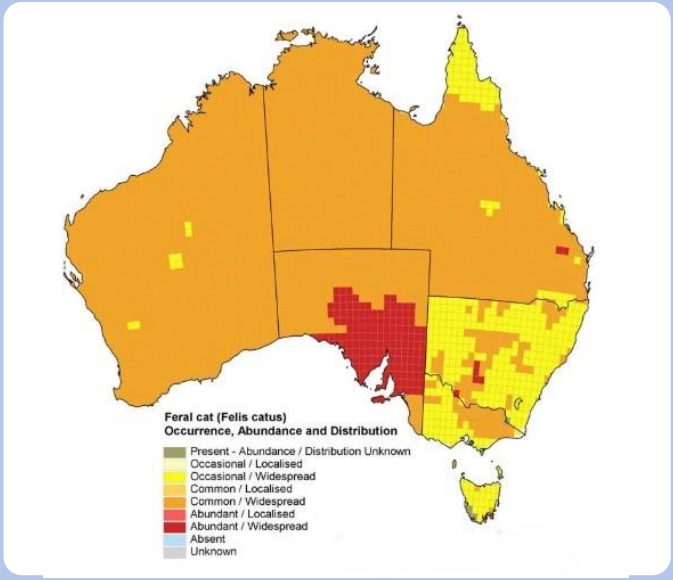
Long-term, integrated control programs using baiting, trapping and ground shooting continue to be the most effective approach for reducing feral cat populations at landscape scale. Monitoring also remains critical in supporting the long-term effectiveness of feral cat management.

Automated monitoring, thermal technology and detection dogs are improving feral cat detection and control, particularly on islands and in remote areas. South Australia's Kangaroo Island Feral Cat Eradication Program is reporting major declines in feral cat detections. Tasmania also reported progress on offshore islands, including possible eradications and improved breeding success for threatened species.

In New South Wales, a three-year $8.5 million targeted feral cat control program has commenced, combining strategic control, monitoring and a dedicated ground-shooting program using thermal imaging and drones. The initiative builds on earlier research between the University of New England, NSW NPW and DPIRD that developed and trialled management approaches, including baiting techniques.

Biosecurity obligations of land managers to control feral cats vary by state and territory.

2. Current Distribution



Source: National Land & Water Resources Audit (2008)

3. National 5-year trends

- Abundance
- Distribution
- Environmental impacts
- Agricultural impacts

Trend:
Increased= ▲
Largely unchanged = ■
Decreased = ▼

Confidence:
High = ●
Moderate = ◐
Low = ○



Photo credit: FeralScan

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Feral cats – State & Territory Snapshot

4. State/Territory 5-year trends

Across Australia, feral cat abundance, distribution and associated impacts have remained largely unchanged over the past five years. However, increases in abundance and environmental impacts were reported by Tasmania and several Queensland Local Government Authorities. Confidence in trend estimates was generally low to moderate due to the difficulty in monitoring feral cat numbers over vast areas.

ABARES (2024) pest animal and weed management land manager surveys indicate that feral cats remained a persistent problem for landholders, with little overall change in the proportion reporting feral cats as a problem over between 2019 and 2022. FeralCatScan indicates increased sighting and control records over the past five years, possibly reflecting increased participation in monitoring and reporting of widespread feral cat populations.

Feral cat trend information is not based on consistent or standardised monitoring. Jurisdictions rely mainly on local observations, landholder reports, control program data, and expert opinion, with limited use of systematic surveys in some areas. As a result, national trend information is fragmented and largely qualitative, and should be considered indicative only, with low to medium confidence in the reported trends across jurisdictions. Reported impacts may lag behind changes in pest distribution or abundance and are also influenced by seasonal conditions, asset vulnerability and management effort.

5-year trend	QLD	NSW	ACT	VIC	TAS	SA	WA	NT
Abundance	■ ◐	■ ◐	■ ○	■ ○	▲ ○	■ ○	■ ○	■ ○
Distribution	■ ◐	■ ◐	■ ○	■ ◐	■ ◐	■ ◐	■ ○	■ ○
Environmental Impact	■ ◐	■ ◐	■ ◐	■ ◐	▲ ○	■ ○	■ ○	■ ○
Agricultural Impact	■ ◐	■ ◐	■ ◐	■ ◐	■ ○	■ ○	■ ○	■ ○

5-year trend:
Increased= ▲
Largely unchanged = ■
Decreased = ▼

Confidence:
High = ●
Moderate = ◐
Low = ○

Feral cats eradicated from **Three Hummock Island** in 2025.

5. Building capacity

Building capability among land managers, practitioners and communities will remain an important part of improving feral cat management outcomes. The National Feral Cat and Fox Management Coordination Program's Online Feral Cat Management Forum in 2025 provided an opportunity for practitioners, researchers, land managers and agencies to share knowledge, discuss emerging tools and technologies, and learn from practical management experiences across Australia.

The forum included presentations on strategic feral cat management, Indigenous-led approaches, agricultural disease risks including toxoplasmosis, and practical control tools such as baiting, trapping and monitoring technologies. Continued investment in knowledge sharing, practitioner networks and targeted capability-building activities will support the uptake of effective, integrated feral cat management approaches across different landscapes.



Photo credit: Centre for Invasive Species Solutions

Feral cat management programs protect native wildlife, livestock and cultural and social assets.

6. Control tools and efforts

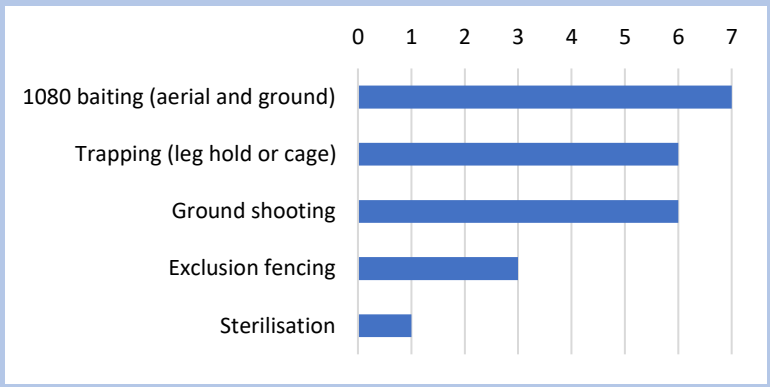
Across Australia, feral cat control activities were undertaken through a range of targeted management programs on public and private land. Significant investment by government agencies targeted feral cat management, through broader invasive species programs that included feral cat control.

Baiting, trapping and ground shooting remain the core control tools for managing feral cats. Exclusion fencing was also reported as a core control tool by New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia. Parks Victoria also reported the use of sterilisation programs.

Baiting efforts were greatest in Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland. In New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, management activities were primarily centred on trapping and ground shooting. Australian Capital Territory reported no feral cat control work in 2024-25.

Monitoring was identified as a core activity by six jurisdictions and is critical for supporting direct control measures. Community engagement and securing of funding for long-term programs were also considered core activities by four jurisdictions.

Number of jurisdictions using each control tool for feral cat management in 2024–25.



Over 3.5 million hectares under feral cat control

Over 1.3 million trap nights targeting feral cats

7. Program goals and achievements

Goal	ACT[A]	NSW	QLD	TAS[B]	VIC	WA	SA	NT
On track to reduce impacts		Partially achieved	Partially achieved	Achieved	Partially achieved	Partially achieved	Partially achieved	Partially achieved
On track to reduce future impacts		Partially achieved	Not achieved		Partially achieved	Partially achieved	Partially achieved	Partially achieved
On track to reduce abundance		Partially achieved	Partially achieved	Achieved	Partially achieved		Partially achieved	Partially achieved

[A]ACT agencies reported no feral cat program undertaken in 2024-25. [B]Program status reflects progress towards the objectives of participating agency management programs and, in some cases, may not represent progress across the entire state. Blank responses indicate that no goal was nominated, reflecting differences in management objectives between programs, regions and jurisdictions.

National goal score



- Achieved
- Partially achieved
- Not achieved
- Unsure
- Not nominated

Jurisdictions reported varying levels of confidence in the effectiveness of feral cat management programs. Most jurisdictions considered programs to be partially or not achieving objectives related to reducing impacts. In Tasmania, programs are considered on track due to strong progress in reducing feral cats on offshore islands, with possible eradications, positive responses of threatened species and reduced toxoplasmosis impacts in livestock.

Queensland's rating reflects reported increases in feral cat abundance and impacts in some local government areas. While management activities are occurring across the state, increases in localised feral cat populations and impacts highlight ongoing challenges in achieving reductions at landscape scale. Variation in program achievements across jurisdiction highlights challenges posed by high feral cat numbers and the scale of control efforts required to reduce their impacts.

Various programs are being undertaken by the Northern Territory Government, local councils, NGOs, NRM groups and Aboriginal landholders to manage feral cats, with many supported through Commonwealth programs such as Saving Native Species and Priority Places.

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8. Where to from here?

Feral cats continue to have significant impacts on native wildlife and remain one of the leading threats to Australia's small mammals, birds, reptiles and other native fauna. Their cryptic behaviour, broad habitat range and ability to persist at low densities make them difficult to detect and effectively manage. While a range of control techniques is available, no single method is effective in all situations, and sustained, integrated management is required to reduce their impacts over the long term.

Across Australia, governments, landholders, Traditional Owners, conservation organisations and local communities are implementing coordinated feral cat management programs to protect threatened species and ecological communities. Where these programs are sustained and adapted to local conditions, they are delivering measurable conservation outcomes.

Community participation is expanding the scale and effectiveness of feral cat management beyond public conservation estates. Around significant conservation areas, such as Dryandra Woodland National Park in Western Australia, partnerships with neighbouring landholders and communities are strengthening coordinated control and improving protection for threatened species. Continued investment in community awareness, participation and coordinated action will be critical to achieving long-term conservation outcomes.



Photo credit: Kangaroo Island Landscape Board, Government of South Australia



Photo credit: NRM-south Tasmania

The Kangaroo Island Feral Cat Eradication Program aims to eradicate feral cats from Dudley Peninsula to protect native wildlife and agriculture. During 2024–25, the program recorded its lowest feral cat detection levels and removed 346 feral cats through intensive trapping. AI-enabled cameras, remotely monitored traps, thermal imaging, detection dogs and GIS technology have improved surveillance and decision-making.

Tasmania's offshore island feral cat programs are reducing feral cat impacts while protecting threatened species and supporting ecosystem recovery. On King Island, coordinated trapping efforts removed 460 feral cats within 12 months. Research and innovation, including improvements to Felixer grooming traps and monitoring approaches, continue to strengthen future feral cat control.

National Feral Cat and Fox Management Coordination

National Feral Cat and Fox Management Coordination: https://feralcatandfox.com.au/

Glovebox Guide: https://pestsmart.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/03/CISS-Glovebox-Guide-Cat-web-1.pdf

pestSMART Feral cats toolkit: https://pestsmart.org.au/toolkits/feral-cats/

FeralCatScan: https://feralscan.org.au/feralcatscan

National Vertebrate Pest Management Report Card: LINK

This score card has been developed by the National Vertebrate Pest Coordinators, in collaboration with state and territory government agencies, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Terrestrial Vertebrate Working Group.
July 2026