

Setting the scene

Pest animals have major economic, environmental and social impacts in Australia. A number of introduced animals, such as rabbits, foxes, feral pigs and feral cats, have become significant problems for agriculture, the environment and people's social values. Pest animals cause significant damage to crops and seriously affect Australia's livestock industries by preying on stock and competing for pasture. Some also cause severe land degradation such as increased soil erosion and stream turbidity. In terms of Australia's natural environment, competition, habitat destruction and predation by pest animals threatens the survival of Australia's native plants and animals. Pest animals can also act as reservoirs for disease that affect native wildlife, domestic stock or people.

Source: Vertebrate Pests Committee, *Australian Pest Animal Strategy*, Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, Canberra, 2007



What to do

Scientific posters are one way of disseminating information at conferences. Create an interesting and informative poster reporting the occurrence of a pest animal in Australia.

Your poster should be no smaller than 80cm by 80cm.

Choose one animal from the following established pest species in Australia:

- ▶ fox
- ▶ rabbit
- ▶ cane toad
- ▶ feral cat
- ▶ feral pig
- ▶ feral goat
- ▶ feral horse
- ▶ wild dog (dingo)

Include in your research:

- ▶ a detailed description of the pest animal
- ▶ the country it originated from
- ▶ its diet
- ▶ habitat preference
- ▶ reproduction
- ▶ sedentary or migratory movements
- ▶ the area in Australia where it was first introduced (not applicable to all pest animals)
- ▶ the original purpose for the introduction
- ▶ the characteristics that have enabled this animal to become an established pest in Australia
- ▶ areas where it is considered a pest elsewhere in the world (not applicable to all pest animals)
- ▶ the reasons why this animal is considered a pest
- ▶ existing control measures

Record your personal opinion and predict future outcomes based on the following:

- ▶ the possibility of further spread and increase in population of this pest animal
- ▶ future economic impacts
- ▶ future control methods that may be scientifically discovered

A stylized eye icon with a black pupil and white sclera, looking towards the right.

Feral fact

The rate of spread of the rabbit in Australia was the fastest of any colonising mammal anywhere in the world.

Two rabbits can increase to 184 rabbits in only 18 months.