

Feral Goats

FACT SHEET

www.wirraminna.org/drdave-outback/

The outback is home to many species, not all of them native. One very common non-native animal is the feral goat - the same animal that you find on farms, but running free in the wild.

- Goats are an invasive feral animal introduced into Australia with the First Fleet in 1788.
- Goats, with their sharp hooves, destroy the soil's surface leading to erosion.
- Goats strip the leaves from shrubs and trees (defoliation).
- Goats break delicate branches of native shrubs by rubbing and standing on branches.
- Goats ring-bark and kill trees.
- Goats exclude other animals from water holes.
- Goats compete with native animals and livestock for scarce food and water in the outback.
- Too much goat dung around waterholes causes the water to lose oxygen – this can kill all the native freshwater plants and animals.
- Management of feral goats is an important part of helping outback biodiversity. Some of the things that can be done are to fill in dams, fence off dams and vegetation, muster and sell goats.



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ACTIVITIES

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1. NSW is the only state to have not declared goats as a pest animal. Why is that? What is being done to control goats, and other feral pests in NSW?

2. Find out more about feral goats at the following website and answer the questions.

www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/publications/feral-goat.html

What breeds of goat make up the Australian feral goat?

Where are feral goats found in Australia?

What is a Judas goat? Why is it called that?

3. Where dingos and wild dogs are present, feral goats generally do poorly. However, they are often found in sheep-grazing areas, where dingos and wild dogs have been removed or heavily controlled by pastoralists. Many Australian scientists now believe that we need to re-establish these top predators back into Australian ecosystems to control introduced pests such as goats, foxes and cats. Find out more about this controversial subject at:

tinyurl.com/kczavnk

What would this sort of reintroduction mean for the environment, tourism and regional economics?