

Hello and welcome to our biannual newsletter

This issue updates you on the activities of the NBG from July–December 2024 and introduces you to:

- the new pest and damage reporting tool for landholders
- the NBG team
- our plans for aerial culls of priority pests in 2025/26, and
- upcoming NBG events.



News from the NBG team



In July, the NBG farewelled its inaugural Executive Officer, Marieke Jansen. The strong and collaborative relationships that NBG shares with its stakeholders are due to Marieke’s commitment and hard work over 6 years. The NBG had many significant achievements under her direction, she will be missed. Thankfully, Marieke hasn’t completely left. She has been very generous with her time, helping the new Executive Officer and the Landholder Liaison Officer settle into the NBG.

The AGM in October was well attended with 47 recorded attendees, and several more at the workshop after the meeting. Thank you to all attendees for your time, interest and input into planning for future pest management.

At the AGM, Steve Rowe stepped down from the board after dedicating 6 years to the NBG. Many thanks to Steve, and our new and continuing board members, for their commitment to the NBG.

The NBG has welcomed 42 new members since October. Membership is free and comes with some handy benefits, see page 6. Please check with your neighbours– do they know about the NBG? Direct them to our updated website if they’d like to join.

Head to the updated NBG website.

You can now apply for membership, Restricted Chemical Product (RCP) Permits, and report a pest sighting or damage at nbg.org.au

Updates on Priority Pests (July - December)

Wild dogs

All Wild Dog work is inside the State Barrier Fence

- 17 dogs culled by trapping/shooting (confirmed by carcass)
- 5000 aerial baits laid in October

Feral Pigs

- 703 pigs culled by trapping/baiting* (confirmed by carcass)
- Additional monitoring cameras procured
- 4 extra pig traps purchased

**not all baited pigs are seen/confirmed. The number of pigs at pre feeding are counted but not reported here to avoid confusion.*

Other

- 847 emus controlled by aerial cull
- 21 foxes & 2 cats by 1 LPMT in December*

**LPMTs cull foxes and cats as part of their work, but they aren't often the focus pest. From 2025, the NBG will record all fox and cat data.*

Landholder reports

?

Feral Pigs

?

Wild Dogs

?

Other: foxes, rabbits, cats, cacti...

In the next newsletter, this section will present information from landholder reports.

We want your reports, please!
To understand how much work we need to do and how well we are doing it, we need to know the size of pest problem.

We could carry out population surveys but we'd rather than spend DPR funds on control efforts.

Meet the NBG team - new and old



Administration Staff



Clare Engelke
Executive Officer
 041 110 1847
 nbglllo@outlook.com





Jay Rayner
Landholder Liaison Officer
 nbglllo@outlook.com



Penny Walker
Finance Officer & Board Secretary/Treasurer

Licensed Pest Management Technicians (LPMTs)

| | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|---|-----------------------|---|
|  | Josh Gould | <i>Wild dogs, pigs, foxes, rabbits & cats</i> |  | Ray Hughes | <i>Wild dogs, foxes & cats</i> |
|  | Wayne Heal | <i>Pigs, foxes, cats and rabbits</i> |  | Andrew O'Dwyer | <i>Wild dogs, cacti, foxes & cats</i> |

| Board of Directors | | LGA represented |
|---|--------------------------------|------------------------|
|  <p>NBG Board 24/25 (they are more focused at meetings than photo sessions 😊). Absent: Ashley Eastough</p> | Jason Batten (Chair) | Chapman Valley |
| | Scott Bridgeman (Deputy Chair) | Northampton |
| | Lloyd Cripps | Northampton |
| | Darren Cobby | Greater Geraldton |
| | Mike Kerkmans | Greater Geraldton |
| | Carlie Rowe | Greater Geraldton |
| | Anthony Hollins | Greater Geraldton |
| | Ashley Eastough | Chapman Valley |

Landholder Reporting Tool

Data is essential to keep our pest management activities effective and funded into the future.

In December we added a Landholder Reporting Tool to the NBG website. It's a short form for landholders to report pest sightings or damage, provide detailed location information and upload photographs.

The NBG will use landholder reports to prioritise and plan our pest control activities.

If you'd like assistance in finding or using the report, please contact Clare or Jay. We're happy to get you started. We will demonstrate it at our Community Briefing Sessions on Feral Pig Control early in 2025 (details page 7).

Feral Pig Control in 2025 & 2026

In January 2025, we will commence a zoned approach to increase our efforts in managing feral pigs. This approach has delivered encouraging results for the Midlands Biosecurity Group (MBG) and Central Wheatbelt Biosecurity Association (CWBA).



The MBG & CWBA implemented a zoned approach for aerial culls in 2023, using four zones. Linda Vernon, the CWBA's Executive Officer, presented a detailed outline of the targeted management to the NBG Board in December. At the same meeting, the NBG Board confirmed an increase in spending on feral pig management for the next 18 months, with a trial of zoned management of aerial culls.

Commencing in January 2025 the NBG will start with nine zones, initially ground baiting and/or trapping, followed by aerial culling. The nine priority zones were identified using information from our LPMTs, monitoring cameras, and pig densities recorded in the 2018–2024 DPIRD aerial culls. The zones with the highest densities of feral pigs and landholder agreement to participate will be targeted first.

Zone boundaries are provisional. As we gather more information and experience with this approach, the zones can be refined, and additional zones identified. Landholder information is essential to increase our understanding of pig densities and improve the management of feral pigs in the region. The landholder reporting tool is available at nbg.org.au.

Aerial Culls & Landholder Contributions

At the 2024 AGM and workshop, attendees discussed a proposal for a landholder financial contribution to aerial culls.

The landholders present were supportive of the proposal. A survey following the workshop determined a financial contribution of 30% from landowners (70% NBG) would be an accepted value.

However, at the December Board Meeting it was decided that landholder contributions will not be required for coordinated aerial culls in 2025 through to June 2026. This is because of the unexpected increase in Declared Pest Rates in 2024, and subsequent increase in funding to the NBG. The rate increases were owing to increases in Unimproved Land Values in the region. While landholders will not be required to financially contribute to aerial culls, there are changes to required documents and landholder participation for inclusion in NBG funded aerial culls.

Feral pigs

To be included in NBG aerial culls for feral pigs, landholders will be required to allow and participate in monitoring, pre-feeding, and ground baiting or trapping on their property.



Wayne and Josh, our LPMTs, will coordinate the ground activities and work with participating landholders on the ground program. On ground activities will commence 6-12 weeks before an aerial cull. This approach will reduce the cost of aerial culls, allowing for more coverage, and more aerial culls, of the region. Ultimately, the NBG aims to reduce the negative impact of feral pigs on primary production and biodiversity in the region.



Emus

The NBG will survey its members in September/October to determine the need and interest in aerial culling for emus. A Damage Permit, issued by the DBCA, will be required from landholders to be included in an emu aerial cull. Damage Permits are issued for three years by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA).

Damage Permits are obtained online, further information can be found on the NBG and DBCA websites. Several landowners in our region have obtained Damage Permits and are available to provide advice, if you would like to speak to someone who has successfully completed the process. Jay and Clare are also happy to assist.

Please contact the Clare if you would like further information.

NBG Membership benefits

- Apply for and cover the cost of your Restricted Chemical Permit (normally \$87.72)
- NBG can manage your RCP permit(s), by providing an automated notification 3 months before it expires, assist in applying for a new permit, and submit amendments on your behalf, should you require them.
- Receive first notification of Community Baiting Days, aerial culls and other NBG activities.
- Fast access to LPMT services, including free bait for pigs, wild dogs, foxes, cats and rabbits.
- Voting rights at AGMs and eligibility to sit on the Board (full members only).
- Invitation to submit your pest concerns and ideas for our Operational Plan - via annual survey (commencing in 2025) and at the AGM.
- Biannual newsletter
- Text notification of events and meetings - if you prefer text to email.
- Access to update your details with the NBG online or via text.

Most importantly, you have a voice and vote on how your Declared Pest Rate is spent in the region.

Upcoming events

January

- Feral pig ground activities commence in Zones 1 & 2
- Community Baiting Day Registration sent to members.
Registration is essential to ensure bait availability
- Sampling of rabbits for presence of Calicivirus in the NBG region

February

- **Landholder Briefing on Feral Pig Control, Northampton (7th @ 9.30 am)**
- 19-20: Talking RBG meeting in Perth
- **Community Baiting Days & Landholder Briefings on Feral Pig Control at Yuna (25th @ 8.30 am) & Mullewa (27th @ 8.30 am)**

March

- Feral pigs: 1st aerial cull; ground activities in Zones 3, 4 & 5
- 24 - 26: National Feral Pig Conference in Queensland
- **Community Baiting Day, Northampton (4th March @ 8.30 am)**
- **Community Baiting Day and Landholder Briefing on Feral Pig Control, Walkaway (date TBC)**

If you have any questions or feedback for the NBG, or would like more information on upcoming events, please contact Clare Engelke, 0411 101 847 or nbg_eo@outlook.com, or your local board representative.

Feral Pig Zones - Q&As

How will I know if I'm in a zone for aerial culls?

NBG will contact you. We will first determine if you are willing to participate in ground activities, as this is a prerequisite for inclusion in aerial culls. We can assist you with your RCP permit, if you need one or an amendment.

We will send an update to all members by mid-February, identifying the first 9 zones.

If I'm not in a zone, how does this help me?

NBG operates using a nil tenure approach, i.e. a landscape scale. Feral pigs don't care about property boundaries, as we're sure you know. Where we remove feral pigs from the landscape, everyone in the landscape benefits. If you believe you should be in a zone, please contact us. The more reports we receive, with locations & supportive photos, the more accurate we can be in determining the zone boundaries.

Will the zones ever change?

Yes, and hopefully they change quickly. The zones have been determined based on pig density information collected from previous aerial culls, and LPMT reports and observations. As we gather more data and hit heavily populated areas, we hope to see a change in population densities and a need to move zone boundaries.

Why do you keep mentioning reporting and data?

We don't have a good understanding of how many feral pigs are in the NBG region. If we can improve our understanding of population sizes and the costs of damage caused by feral pigs, we can better plan our management efforts and ensure we have sufficient resources.

If we need to apply for additional funding grants to support our work, data and evidence of landholder support will make for a stronger application and more chance of success.

If I'm not in a zone, can I still get help with feral pigs on my property?

Yes, absolutely. The zones are for planning our aerial culling efforts. During the focused ground baiting work in zoned areas, it might be more difficult to get access to a trap depending on whether landholders are baiting or trapping. However, we will manage our work and equipment to ensure others can get help where required. Have we mentioned that landholder reports and communication will help us identify landholder needs?

Why isn't all aerial cull work completed in January to March?

Ideally perhaps it would be, because the pigs are easier to locate. This is a new management approach and to ensure our efforts are effective as possible, we need time to reduce pig numbers by ground baiting/trapping first and to arrange aerial cull contractors. The ground activities will also help us identify the locations of remaining pigs to reduce the search time for aerial crews. Our first aerial cull will be completed in March by DPIRD, in the Northampton area. Subsequent culls will be put out to tender.

You haven't answered all my questions. Where can I find out more?

You are very welcome to phone or email Clare. You can also contact your local board representative. If you are happy to wait for answers, we will be holding **Landholder Briefings on Feral Pig Control** in February and March, listed in the *Upcoming Events* on page 6.