

North West Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plan **2018 - 2023**





Local Land
Services

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North West Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plan 2018-2023

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing on July 2018. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Local Land Services or the user's independent adviser.

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Ministers Foreword

I am pleased to announce the North West Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plan. This plan is a vital community tool, as it provides a strategic regional approach to improving the coordination and delivery of on ground, nil tenure pest animal management activities for terrestrial vertebrate and freshwater aquatic pest species in NSW.

The North West Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plan is an excellent example how local communities can work together to protect the environment, community and economy from the negative impacts of pest animals and to support positive outcomes for our landscapes and ensuring we maintain a bio-secure environment.

The North West Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Committee represents major land uses and relevant economic, environment and community representatives for each region. The committee delivers a collaborative approach to setting regional priorities and is integral to the ongoing effective delivery of pest animal management outcomes in the region.

This plan is a product of extensive collaboration and engagement across numerous stakeholders involved in pest animal management. It will continue to grow and evolve with the changing environment and is an excellent framework to contribute to the delivery of improved coordinated pest animal management in NSW.

*The Hon. Niall Blair MLC
Minister for Primary Industries,
Minister for Regional Water,
and Minister for Trade and Industry*



Executive Summary

The North West Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plan (RSPAMP) has been developed in consultation with private and public Landholders, National Parks and Wildlife, NSW DPI and University researchers. This plan aligns with the Australian Pest Animal Strategy 2017-2027 and the NSW Biosecurity Strategy 2013-2021. Together, these strategies and the North West RSPAMP aim for the following overall goals for pest animal management:

- increase community awareness of pest animals and their impact
- promote best practice management for the control of pest animals
- reduce the impacts of pest animals across the landscape
- improve reporting of pest animals to gather more accurate distributions and impact trends
- identify alert species that could become established in our region

This plan allows for unseasonal conditions to be taken advantage of for more effective control of pest animals. For example, drought conditions with restricted water access will alter the movement patterns of feral pigs as they stay closer to the water source, making them easier to target with control methods. Activities outlined within the plan are a guide for all land managers to control pest animal species on their land. Best management practice for pest control promotes a coordinated approach, on a landscape scale rather than property scale, which utilises integration of many control methods.

This plan has identified the following regionally significant priority species:

- Wild Dogs
- Feral Pigs
- European Red Fox
- Wild Rabbit
- Feral Goats
- Red, Fallow and Chital Deer
- Wild Horses
- Feral Cats

Of particular focus in the plan is Wild Dogs and Deer species due to their rate of spread through the region. Additionally, Red Fox and Feral Pigs are a *highly ranked priorities* due to the significant impact they have on both the environment and agriculture.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

- The North West Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plan (RSPAMP) outlines how Government, industry and the community can work together and share the responsibility to eradicate, contain or manage pest animals in terrestrial and freshwater aquatic environments across the region
- The economic impact of wild rabbits, carp, pigs, foxes, dogs, goats and introduced birds has been estimated at \$170 million in NSW.
- Under the *NSW Biosecurity Act 2015*, **all** community members have a general biosecurity duty to prevent, minimise or eliminate any biosecurity risk. The general biosecurity duty is a principle that can be used by the community, landholders, Government and industry to implement best practice behaviours to achieve effective pest animal management.

1.2 Purpose of the Plan

The overall purpose of the RSPAMP is to work together to protect the environment, community and economy from the negative impacts of pest animals to support positive outcomes for biosecurity and sustainable landscapes. The plan supports regional implementation of the *NSW Biosecurity Act 2015* and NSW Biosecurity Strategy and is reflective of key aligning themes including:

- Improved community engagement in biosecurity management
- Improved identification, diagnostic, surveillance, reporting and tracing systems for pests, diseases and weeds.
- Increased numbers of well trained and resourced people

This plan is one of eleven RSPAMPs across NSW. It presents a clear vision by identifying regional priorities for pest animal management and outlines how Government agencies, community groups and individual landholders will share responsibility and work together across land tenures to prevent, eradicate, contain and manage the impacts of pest animals.

RSPAMPs will provide guidance on how both public and private land managers can meet their general biosecurity duty and identify key commitments for pest animal management activities over the life of this plan.

1.3 Our region Overview

The North West Local Land Services region covers an area of approximately 82,000km², encompassing the council areas of Gunnedah, Gwydir, Liverpool Plains, Moree Plains, Narrabri, Tamworth and Walgett. It is home to around 113,000 people with 7,500 people directly employed in Agricultural industries.

The region has a diverse climate, ranging from temperate to arid with considerable differences between the east and west areas of the region, and great variety in its landforms, hydrology, vegetation, and soils. Rangeland grazing operations predominate in the west of the region with land use changing to more cropping towards the east, before mixed farming and grazing again dominates in the steeper terrain of the eastern fringe.

There are large parcels of land dedicated to conservation within the region including a RAMSAR Wetland. Land uses in the North West range from extensive grazing operations to intensive animal production, broad scale cropping and intensive irrigated cropping. Other land uses cover forestry, conservation and mining. Refer to the Land Use pie chart below for a full break down of land uses in the North West.

All land uses within the North West Region are conducive to pest animal habitation. Pest animals cause Landholders severe social, emotional, economic and environmental damage. Livestock enterprises and native animal populations are impacted by predation and disease spread from wild dogs, foxes, feral pigs and deer. This disease risk is also a concern for human health as many zoonotic diseases are carried by these pests. Cropping operations provide a food source and habitation for feral pigs, significantly affecting yields. Deer and feral pigs can cause damage to infrastructure such as fences and watering points and all species can effectively spread weeds across their home ranges.

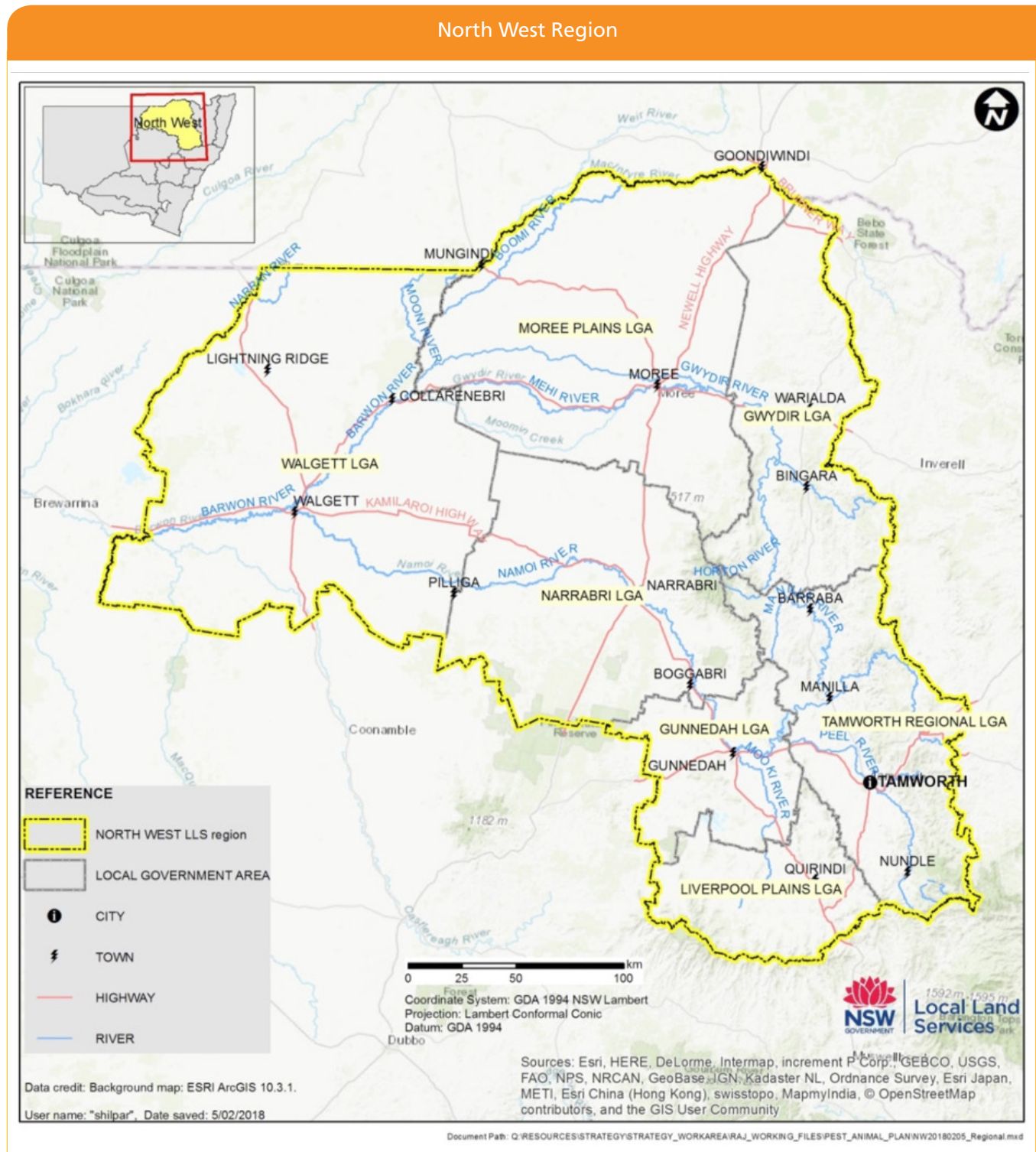


Figure 1 - North West Local Land Services Regional Map

Best management practice for pest animals involves a broadscale approach using integrated control methods in a coordinated manner. Being involved in a pest control group achieves more effective control of pest species across the landscape. Initiating a pest control group is a collaborative effort between private and public landholders and Local Land Services. LLS can assist in the initial coordination and formation of the group and Landholders must commit to the group and take ownership if the group is to continue past the initiation stage. The aim of working together is to ensure all land managers have the capabilities to effectively control pest animals on their land.

In the North West there are many local pest management groups working collaboratively to achieve coordinated and broadscale pest control, and have done so for many years. Some of these groups focus on a single pest species; however the majority of the groups have incorporated all pest species into their control programs. Activities undertaken by these groups include coordinated aerial shooting, trapping and baiting programs.

Model codes of practice and standard operating procedures for best management practice for pest animal control can be found on the Pest Smart website, developed by the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions. The Vertebrate Pest Manual, produced by the NSW DPI also provides details on managing pest animals.

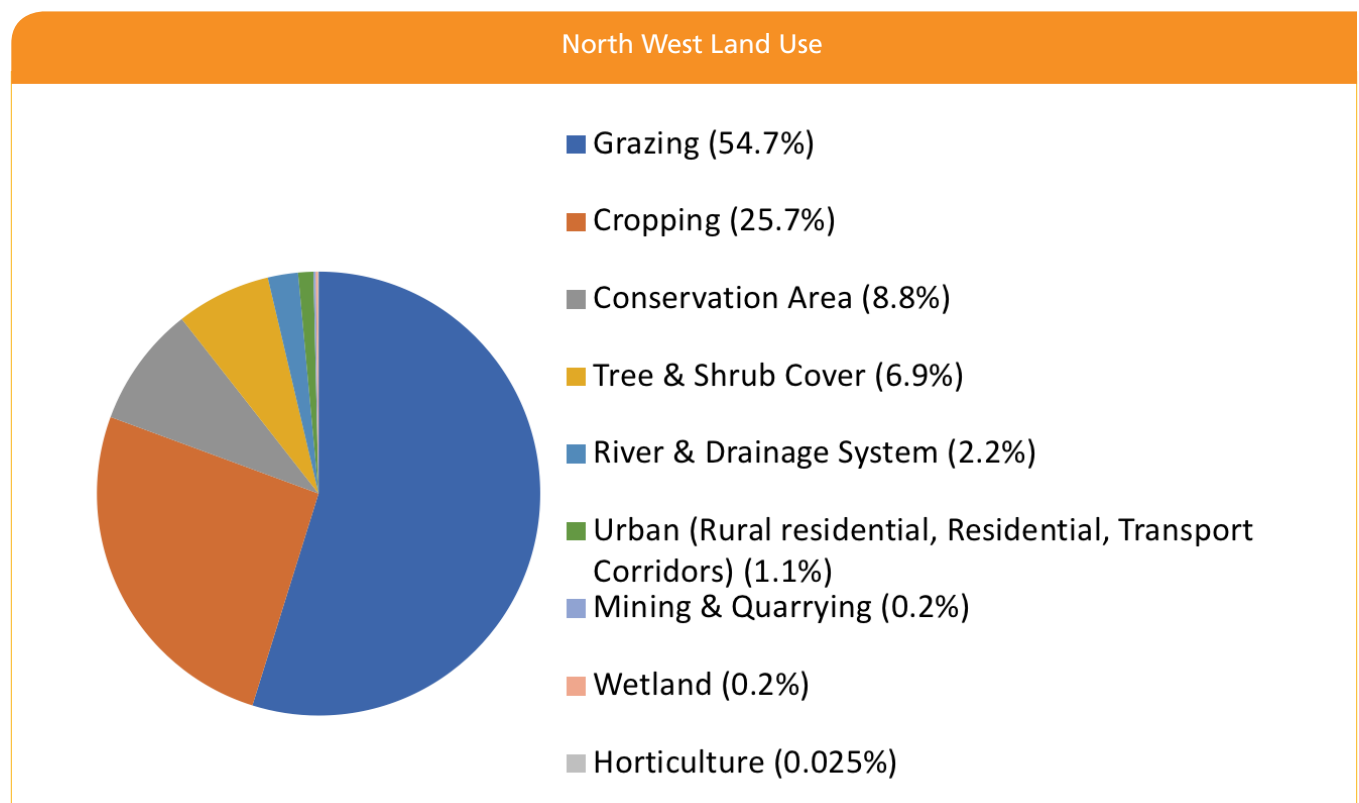


Figure 2 - North West Regional Land Use

1.4 What is considered a pest animal?

Under the *NSW Biosecurity Act 2015*, pest animals are not defined by species. Pest species can be considered as any species (other than native species) that present a biosecurity threat.

Whilst the Act does not define pest animals, there are specific activities that are permitted under the Biosecurity Order (Permitted Activities) that would otherwise be prohibited (such as keeping exotic animals in captivity).

It is the responsibility of individuals to ensure they discharge their general biosecurity duty to manage the biosecurity risks posed by pest animals. The *Biosecurity Regulation 2017* will outline mandatory measures for pest animal management in NSW. General control and management of pest animals outlined in this plan can be considered mechanisms for individuals to discharge their general biosecurity duty and landholders and community members should work with the stakeholders identified for ongoing implementation of pest animal management practices.

1.5 Managing native animals

Native species are protected by law in NSW and are not covered in this RSPAMP. Issues associated with managing the impacts of native species (such as kangaroos, emus, wombats and possums) should be addressed separately in consultation with National Parks and Wildlife Service and having regard to the regulatory requirements of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*. Non-lethal methods may include exclusion netting, fencing, gating, and olfactory devices. Where it is necessary to use lethal methods such as shooting to destroy native animals because they are a threat to human safety, damaging property and/or causing economic hardship, the National Parks and Wildlife Service can issue a biodiversity conservation licence to harm protected native animals under the **Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016**.

For further information visit <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/wildlifelicences/OccupierLicences.htm>

1.6 Framework for pest animals

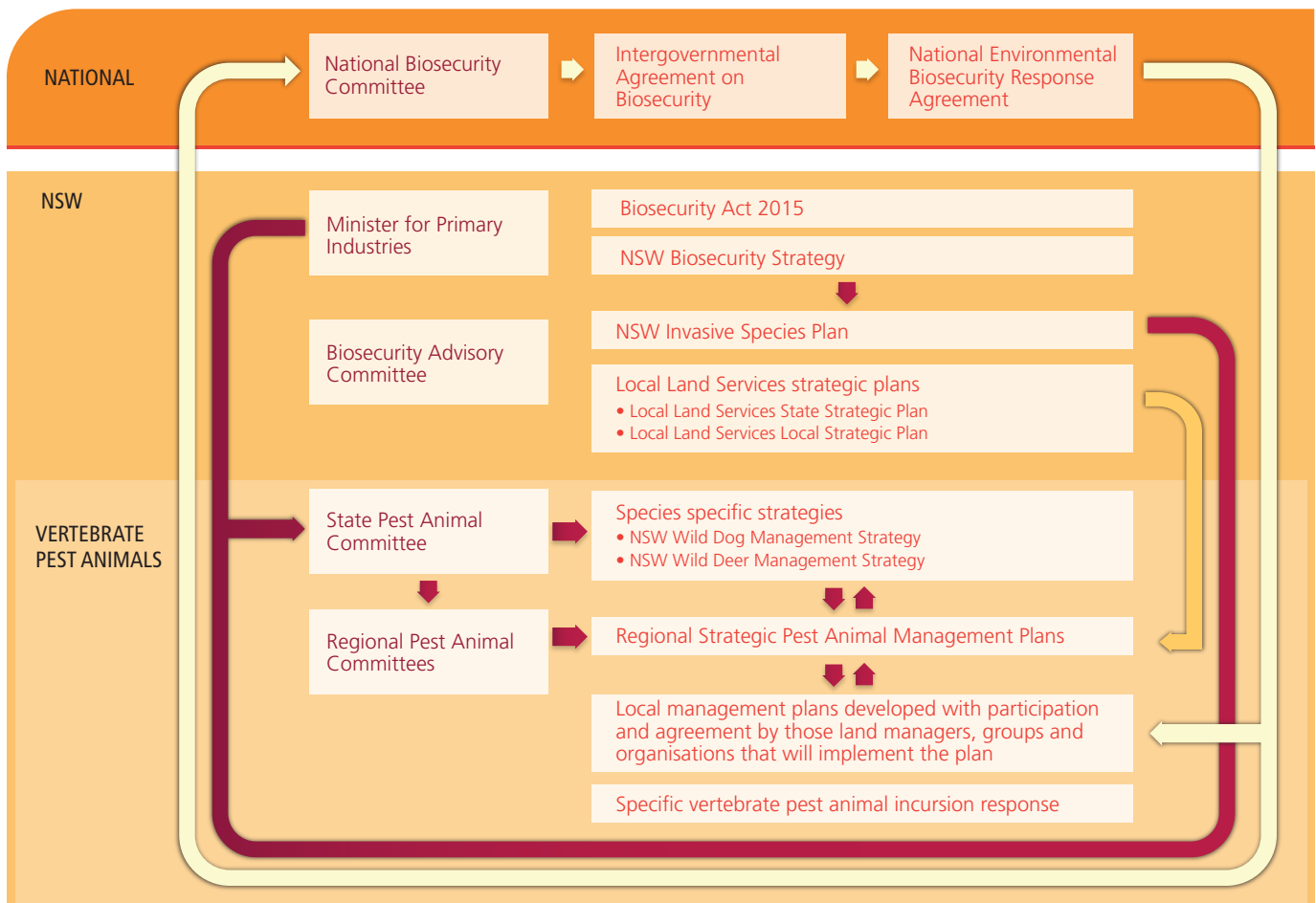


Figure 3 - The NSW Biosecurity framework for Pest Animals in NSW.

1.7 Roles and responsibilities

- Under the new Biosecurity Act 2015 framework, biosecurity is a shared responsibility where Government, industry and the people of NSW work together to protect the economy, environment and community from the impacts of pest animals.
- Public, private and aboriginal land managers all have a shared and equal responsibility to eliminate and minimise biosecurity risks across land in NSW.
- A key focus of the RSPAMP is to encourage engagement and participation across all land tenures to enhance the participation and delivery of coordinated pest animal management activities for improved outcomes.
- Government plays a key role in coordination and regulation for pest animal management under the legislative framework. NSW DPI have a lead role in managing terrestrial and freshwater aquatic pest incursions. Local Land Services supports the delivery of pest animal management activities and also have a regulatory role under the *NSW Biosecurity Act 2015*.

The following outlines the role of the Regional and State Pest Animal Committee in the delivery of the RSPAMP. For more information on key roles and responsibilities in pest animal management, please refer to the Invasive Species Plan 2018-2021.

State Pest Animal Committee

The State Pest Animal Committee (SPAC) is responsible for overseeing a consistent approach to the ongoing operation of RPACs and development of tenure neutral RSPAMPs across the State. SPAC oversee key policy and strategy documents to guide pest animal management outcomes across the state.

Regional Pest Animal Committees

Regional Pest Animal Committees (RPACs) facilitate tenure neutral strategic planning and coordination for priority pest animal management programs in each Local Land Services (LLS) region. RPACs have an important role to play in the delivery of the RSPAMP through promoting land manager and general community involvement in detecting and reporting sightings of new or 'unusual' animals in the local area as well as managing established pest animals. RPACs play an important role in the ongoing periodic review and adaption of the plan as required.



1.8 Guiding principles of pest animal management

The following principles should be considered and implemented by all community, industry, landholders and other stakeholders in pest animal management.

Be alert

Monitor and report sightings of any species you have not seen in your area before. Prevention and early intervention from the community is important to avoid the establishment of new pest animal species.

Work together and participate

Pest animal management is a shared responsibility between landholders, community, industry and Government and requires a coordinated approach across a range of scales and land tenures.

Be committed

Effective pest animal management requires ongoing commitment by land managers, community, Government and industry. Those that create the risks associated with pest species and those that benefit from the pest animal management outcomes should help to minimise impacts and contribute to the costs associated with management

Stay up-to-date

Community, industry, government and landholders should stay up-to-date with new information to ensure that contemporary best practice pest animal management activities are employed to reduce pest animal impacts in a way that is as safe, effective, target-specific and humane as possible.



2. Incursion management and alert species

The following section details the management categories that have been used to minimise and mitigate the impact

We need to work together to ensure early detection and awareness of incursions and alert species are able to be managed swiftly and effectively. It is important the community remain vigilant and report any unusual sightings to ensure a rapid management response.

The *NSW Biosecurity Act 2015* outlines species that are prohibited from being kept in NSW.

Land managers and community members play a major role in reporting any unusual sightings of pest animals in the region.

Alert Species for the North West region:

Sambar Deer

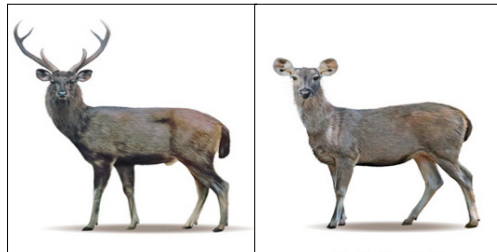


Image: Game Management Authority, Victoria.

Rusa Deer

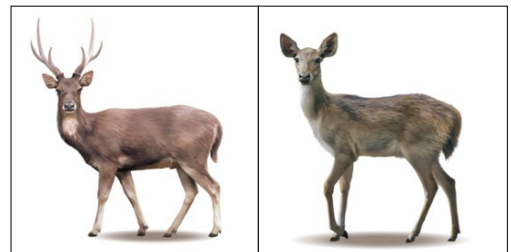


Image: Game Management Authority, Victoria.

Mozambique Tilapia



Photo: Department of Agriculture & Fisheries - QLD

Cane Toad



Photo: J Pumpars - FeralScan

The following mechanism can be used to report unusual situations in the region:

- **Complete the Report an unusual animal sighting form or;**
- **Phone: 1800 680 244**
- **Email: invasive.species@dpi.nsw.gov.au**

For species that are yet to become widely established in NSW, the initial response to incursion reports is managed through consultation between DPI, LLS and OEH. Where species are widely established in NSW but have spread into a new region, Local Land Services and the RPAC will consider whether local eradication or containment should be attempted.



3. Our priority pest species

Common Name	Management Category	Section in Plan	Objectives	5 Year Key Performance Indicator
Wild Dog 	Asset based protection	3.1	Reduce stock losses from Wild Dog attacks	Stock losses from Wild Dog attack reduced by 20% in active control areas
Feral Pig 	Asset based protection	3.2	Reduce production losses from Feral Pig Impacts	Production losses from Feral Pigs reduced by 10% in active control areas
Red Fox (European) 	Asset based protection	3.3	Reduce Red Fox population density	Red Fox population density reduced by 20% in active control areas
Wild Rabbit 	Asset based protection	3.4	Reduce Rabbit population density	Rabbit population density is reduced by 10% in active control areas
Feral Goat 	Asset based protection	3.5	Reduce unmanaged Feral Goat population density	Unmanaged Feral Goat population density is reduced by 5%
Red, Fallow and Chital Deer 	Asset based protection	3.6	Establish a deer exclusion zone within the region	Deer exclusion zone implemented by 2023
Wild Horses 	Containment	3.7	Contain Wild Horse distribution to the Pilliga area	No expansion in distribution of the Pilliga Wild Horse population
Feral Cat 	Asset based protection	3.8	Increase community capacity to control Feral Cats	Community awareness of Feral Cat impacts is increased by 5%
Mice* Indian Myna Common Carp 	Limited action: refer to limited action section. <i>* triggers NSW DPI and LLS response during plague situations</i>			

Pest animals for North West region have been prioritised based on level of risk and feasibility of control assessed through the South Australian Pest Animal Risk Management Guide prioritisation method. Using this method, Common carp, mice and Indian Myna birds were among many species that did not rank on the priority species list and there are limited actions available for their control.

Common carp are a major environmental pest that have impacted on a wide range of native species and have added turbidity in many catchments. Almost all fish species are difficult to control once established, but species specific biological control offer some hope in controlling widespread aquatic pest species. The strategy and focus of management for carp in the region will be to support any coordinated Commonwealth or NSW government biological control programs.

Mice populations during favourable seasonal conditions can reach plague proportions. Proactive control is often undertaken by land managers to avoid impacts on crops. Monitoring and reporting mouse activity is important in detecting population changes. Broad scale baiting programs are undertaken during a plague.

Priority species listed below have been categorised into management categories and further strategies and actions are detailed. All species listed have equal priority under this plan and are not listed in any particular order.

The pest animal distribution maps in this plan are based on state-wide data compiled in 2016 from reports submitted. The maps are at a coarse scale and provide general guidance only about pest animal distribution. A key priority for future implementation of this plan will be to improve reporting of pest animals to refine regional information collected on pest animal distribution and relative abundance. Improved information on distribution and abundance will better guide management and investment.





3.1 Species - Wild Dogs

Wild dog attacks on livestock and domestic pets can have significant financial and emotional impacts on landholders. Sheep, lambs and calves can be killed or left maimed, leaving the Landholder to humanely destroy the injured animals. Attacks on native wildlife have detrimental impacts, especially for threatened and endangered species. The NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2017-2021 promotes a balance between managing wild dogs in areas where they have negative impacts and preserving the ecological role of dingoes.

Eastern Ranges

Wild dog populations are established and considered widespread in the eastern ranges of the North West Local Land Services region. Monitoring, reporting and control programs are well established in this area and land managers are expected to participate fully in programs that are conducted. There are 3 established Wild Dog Control Associations (WDCA's), two of which are cross border groups with Northern Tablelands and Hunter LLS.

Western Plains

Wild Dogs have emerged in the Western Plains region over the last 5 years and are now established. Coordinated on ground control programs are in place with strategic baiting events occurring in conjunction with QLD and Western LLS.

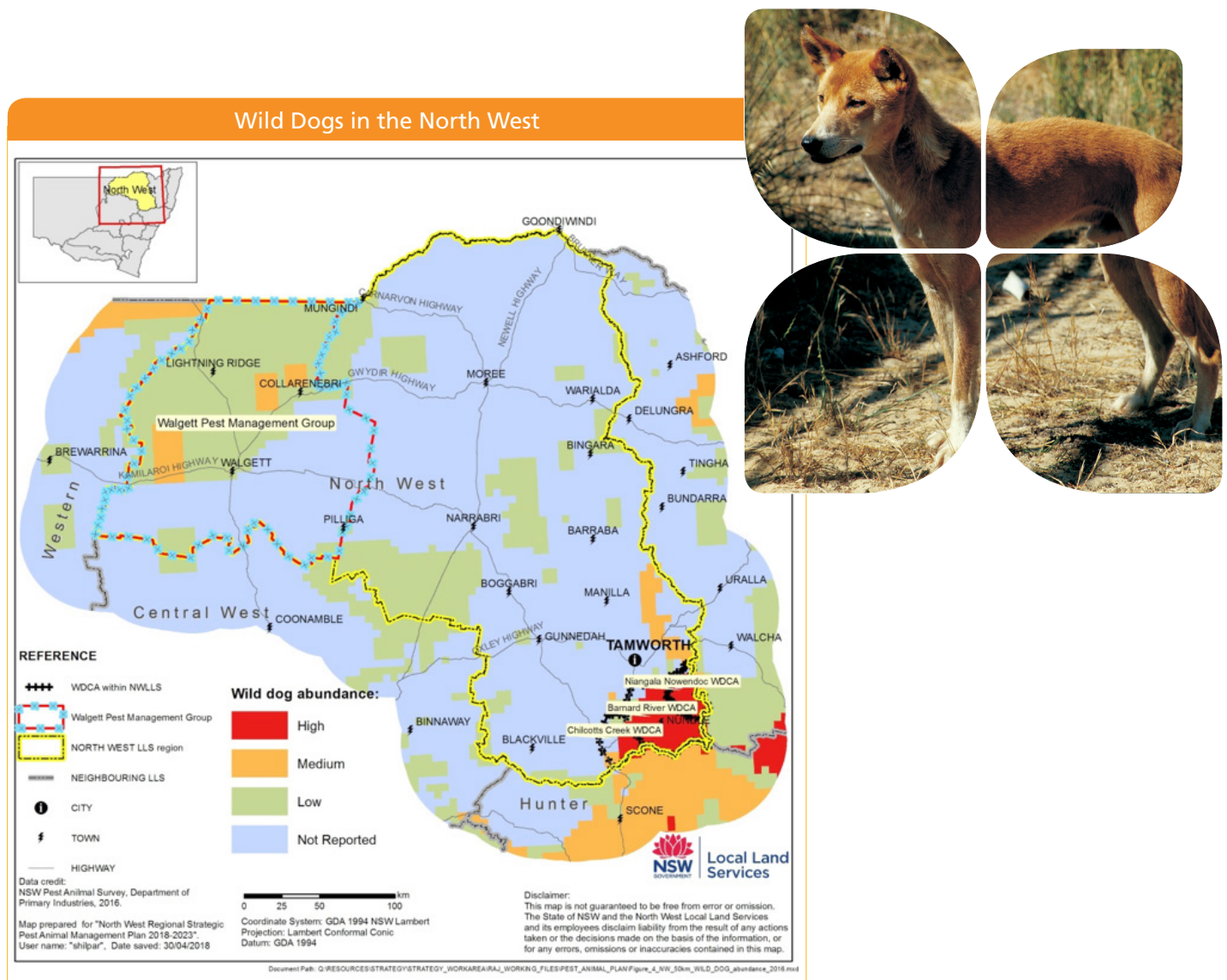


Figure 4 - Wild Dog distribution in the North West Region



Objective Reduce stock losses from Wild Dog attacks			5 Year Key Performance Indicator Stock losses from Wild Dog attack reduce by 20% ¹ in active control areas	
All Land Managers are expected to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report sightings and wild dog attacks to the LLS Implement control strategies on their land Participate in local control group efforts 			What success looks like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landholders working together in control programs Community actively involved in reporting attacks and sightings Key emerging areas for Wild Dog identified Increasing landholder and community awareness Reduced impacts on native species preyed by Wild Dogs 	
Program name/area	Management category	Assets	Activities & Timeframe	Participants
Whole region	Asset based protection	Commercial livestock production	Monitoring & Reporting *Year 1 – Investigate and establish a regional baseline figure for stock losses from Wild Dog attacks. Year 1 – Develop reporting and monitoring system to support annual reporting for stock losses, Wild Dog sightings and population monitoring. Year 1 to 5 – Collect data and report stock losses from Wild Dog attacks. <i>*This approach will be reviewed when the State-wide monitoring framework for pests is implemented in 2019 (See Section 6.2.1)</i>	LLS and NSW DPI LLS, Landholders and Wild Dog Control Associations
			Key Emerging Areas Year 1 – Identify key emerging populations of Wild Dog within the North West region. Year 1 to 5 – Implement integrated pest management activities in key emerging areas (eg. Establishment of Wild Dog control groups and management plans)	Landholders and LLS
			Best Management Practice Year 1 to 5 – Promote and provide Wild Dog control best management practice information inclusive of non-lethal and integrated approaches. Year 1 to 5 – Support new research/trials for improving scientific knowledge on control options and Wild Dog impacts	LLS and NSW DPI LLS and Landholders
			Community Capacity Year 1 to 5 – Conduct targeted training programs (eg. VPT and Canid Pest Ejector Training) to build the capacity of the community to implement control techniques Year 1 to 5 – Develop and implement a community engagement strategy for all pest species in the North West region	All Stakeholders
Chilcott's Creek, Barnard River & Niangala Nowendoc WDCAs	Asset based protection	Commercial livestock production	Year 1 to 5 - coordinate a strategic cross-regional aerial baiting program in autumn as per relevant Wild Dog Management Plan inclusive of review and evaluation	Landholders, Hunter, Northern Tablelands and North West LLS regions.
Walgett Local Government Area with Western LLS & QLD wild dog control programs.	Asset based protection	Commercial livestock production	Year 1 to 5 - Promote participation to undertake ongoing co-ordinated control and relevant training programs as per the Walgett Vertebrate Pest Management Plan inclusive of review and evaluation	NWLLS and Landholders

¹20% figure will be refined after year 1, it is an indicative figure to demonstrate intent

Active control area – implementation of a strategic coordinated control program

Landholder – includes both private and public land managers inclusive of the National Parks & Wildlife Service

3.2 Species – Feral Pigs

Feral pigs are significant environmental and agricultural pests and they are widespread and abundant throughout the North West. They cause damage to crop, pasture and the environment through wallowing, rooting for food and nesting, creating significant soil disturbance, altering drainage, increasing turbidity and sedimentation and greatly assisting the spread of weeds. They also prey on a wide range of native animals including frogs, reptiles, birds and small mammals, as well as livestock such as lambs. Feral Pigs can carry disease and parasites that affect stock and pose a disease risk to humans (*Brucellosis* (*B. suis*), *Leptospirosis* (*L. pomona*) and Q Fever). They can be a major potential host and vector of a number of exotic diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease which is not found in Australia however poses a major threat. The social and economic costs of foot and mouth disease in Australia would be extreme as meat, dairy and wool export markets would be closed until the outbreak was eradicated. Individual farmers would be severely impacted as herds and flocks would be destroyed and domestic markets for animals and animal products would be heavily restricted.

All landholders (private and public lands) are required to participate fully in feral pig management programs in their area by using best practice, legal methods such as approved toxins, shooting and trapping. Group coordination is encouraged where possible in order to achieve the most effective control during a program.

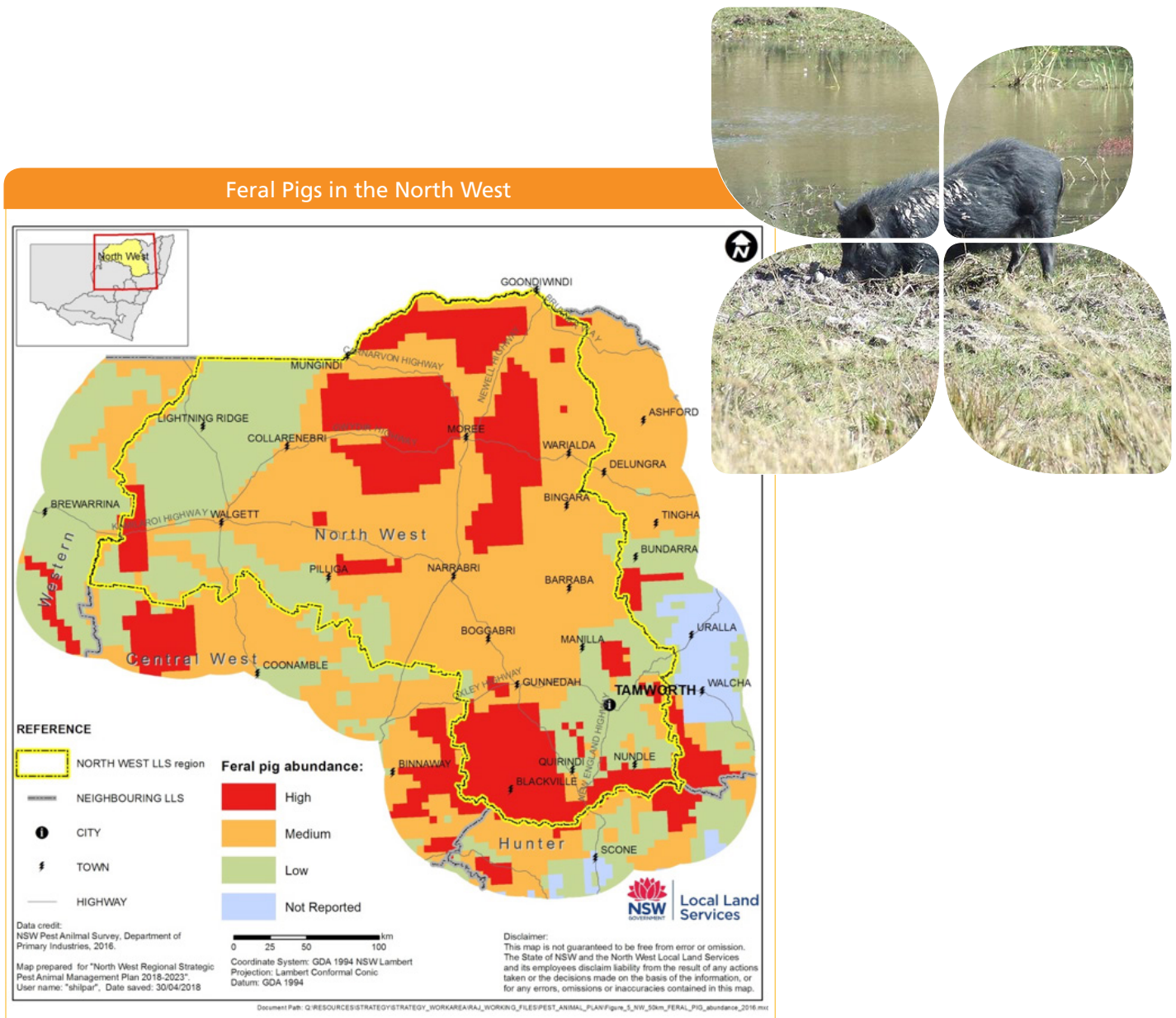


Figure 5 - Feral pig distribution in the North West Region



Objective Reduce production losses from Feral Pig impacts			5 Year Key Performance Indicator Production losses from Feral Pig impact reduced by 10% ¹ in active control areas	
All Land Managers are expected to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement best practice control strategies on their land Participate in local control group efforts 			What success looks like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landholders working together in control programs Community actively involved in reporting sightings Integrated control methods are used Control methods aligned with best practice Improved condition of riparian and wetland environments 	
Program name/area	Management category	Assets	Activities & Timeframe	Participants
Whole region	Asset based protection	Commercial livestock and cropping production Ramsar wetlands, threatened species and ecological communities	Monitoring & Reporting *Year 1 – Investigate and establish a regional baseline figure for production losses from Feral Pig impact. Year 1 – Develop reporting and monitoring system to support annual reporting for production losses and population monitoring. Year 1 to 5 – Collect data and report production losses from Feral Pig impact. <i>*This approach will be reviewed when the State-wide monitoring framework for pests is implemented in 2019 (See Section 6.2.1)</i>	LLS and NSW DPI Landholders
			Control Programs Year 1 to 5 – Implement planned and opportunistic coordinated and integrated control programs at the relevant scale to control emerging Feral Pig populations	Landholders and LLS
			Best Management Practice Year 1 to 5 – Promote and provide best management practice information. Year 1 to 5 – Support new research/trials for improving scientific knowledge on control options and Feral Pig impacts	Landholders, LLS and NSW DPI
			Community Capacity Year 1 to 5 – Conduct targeted training programs to build the capacity of the community to implement control techniques. Year 1 to 5 – Build awareness of disease vector risk of Feral Pig inclusive of potential human impacts. Year 1 to 5 – Develop and implement a community engagement strategy for all pest species in the North West region.	All Stakeholders

¹ 10% figure will be refined after year 1, it is an indicative figure to demonstrate intent

Active control area – implementation of a strategic coordinated control program

Landholder – includes both private and public land managers inclusive of the National Parks & Wildlife Service

3.3 Species – Red Fox (European)

The European Red Fox is widespread and abundant throughout the North West region. Control of foxes is generally undertaken prior to lambing events, with strategic baiting events in autumn and spring conducted by existing control groups and individual Land Managers. Foxes can severely impact sheep and goat enterprises through predation, especially at lambing and kidding times. Their impact has also been noted in cotton operations feeding on cotton bolls, contributed to weed spread through ingestion of fruit such as African boxthorn berries and attacks in domestic poultry production areas. Foxes also pose a health threat to humans through transmission of diseases, including distemper, parvo virus, mange and potential exotic diseases such as rabies.

As an established species that impacts on grazing as well as conservation lands, land managers must take all reasonable steps to suppress and destroy the population. Land Managers must participate in strategic programs in their areas. Control methods for foxes include toxins, trapping, shooting and harbour destruction.

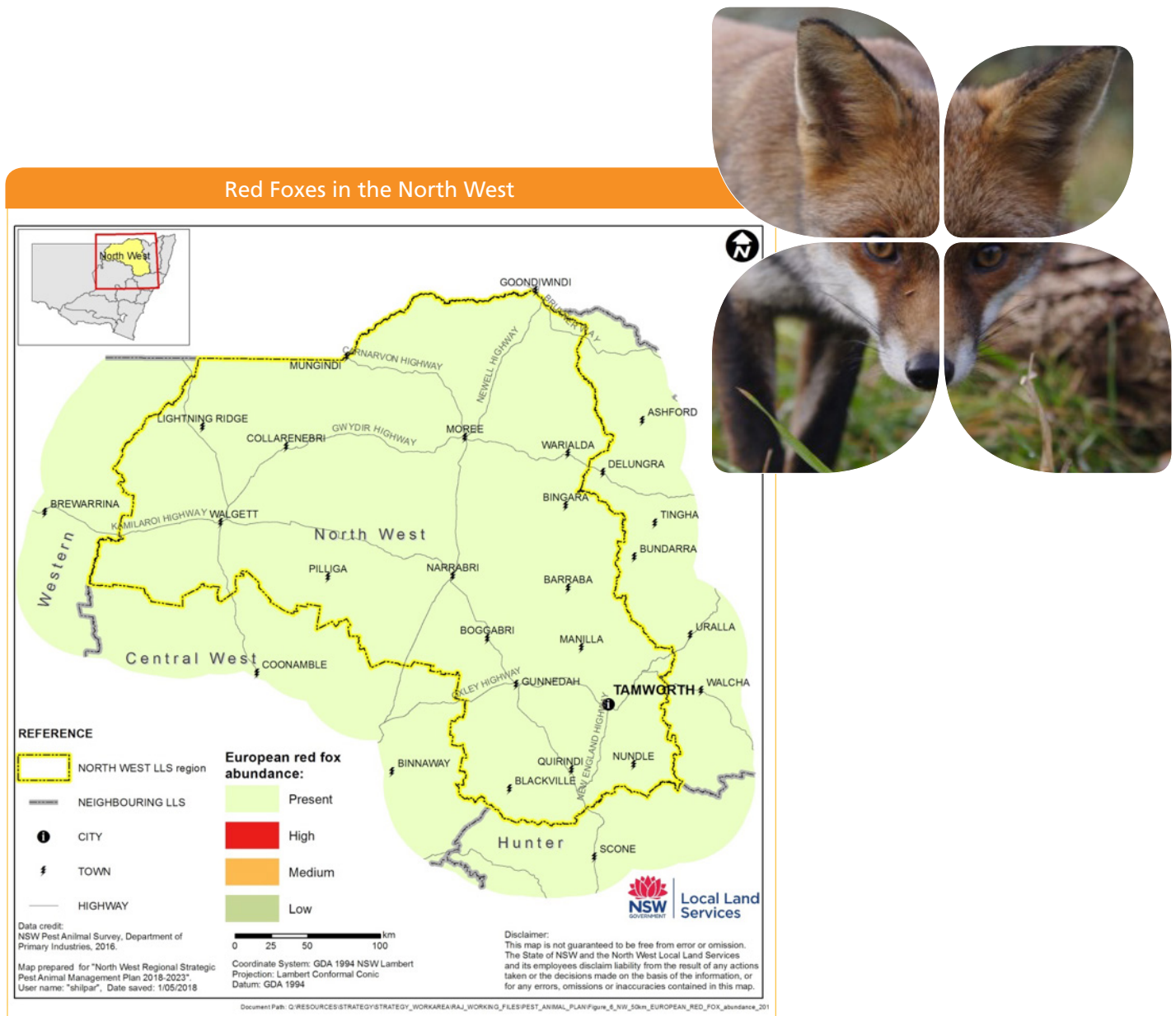


Figure 6 - Fox distribution in the North West Region



Objective Reduce Red Fox population density			5 Year Key Performance Indicator Red Fox population density reduced by 20% ¹ in active control areas	
All Land Managers are expected to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement best practice control strategies to strategically target Foxes Participate in local control group efforts Report production impacts from Foxes 			What success looks like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landholders working together in control programs Integrated best practice control methods are used Improved abundance in native species populations predated by the Red Fox 	
Program name/area	Management category	Assets	Activities & Timeframe	Participants
Whole region	Asset based protection	Sheep production systems	Monitoring & Reporting *Year 1 – Investigate and establish a regional baseline figure for regional lamb survival rates. Year 1 – Develop reporting and monitoring system to support annual reporting for population monitoring. Year 1 to 5 – Collect data and report on population densities. <i>*This approach will be reviewed when the State-wide monitoring framework for pests is implemented in 2019 (See Section 6.2.1)</i>	LLS and NSW DPI Landholders
			Control Programs Year 1 to 5 (Autumn & Spring) – Implement planned and opportunistic coordinated and integrated control programs at the relevant scale to control Fox populations. Year 1 to 5 – Support provision of advice and distribution data to support environmental asset Fox control programs (eg. protection of endangered Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby populations)	Landholders and LLS
			Best Management Practice Year 1 to 5 – Promote and provide best management practice information. Year 1 to 5 – Support new research/trials for improving scientific knowledge on control options and Fox impacts	Landholders, LLS and NSW DPI
			Community Capacity Year 1 to 5 – Conduct targeted training programs to build the capacity of the community to implement control techniques. Year 1 to 5 – Develop and implement a community engagement strategy for all pest species in the North West region.	All Stakeholders

¹20% figure will be refined after year 1, it is an indicative figure to demonstrate intent

Active control area – implementation of a strategic coordinated control program

Landholder – includes both private and public land managers inclusive of the National Parks & Wildlife Service

3.4 Species – Wild Rabbit

Rabbits may occupy a wide range of habitats across the North West region including grasslands, riverbanks, and woodlands, and can achieve high densities in some agricultural and suburban areas. The primary focus for management of this species is a long-term reduction in rabbit numbers. Historical releases of Myxomatosis and Calicivirus has suppressed numbers with pockets of populations fluctuating over time.

Rabbits can have severe environmental and economic impacts by overgrazing native and sown pastures which leads to a loss of plant biodiversity, reduced crop yields and promotion of weed spread. They compete with native animals and livestock for feed, increasing the grazing pressure and lowering carrying capacity. Warrens cause land degradation and erosion, and grazing prevents and inhibits the regeneration of native shrubs and trees.

Rabbits act as a food source for introduced predators, which can lead to increased lamb losses and disease prevalence, and a decrease in small mammal diversity. LLS will support landholders to meet their General Biosecurity Duty, advise on appropriate control techniques and provide training resources on best practice. Control options include toxins, bio control, trapping, shooting, and harbour destruction. Land Managers are required to take all reasonable steps to suppress and destroy populations, and are to participate fully in coordinated programs on warren and harbour destruction in their area.

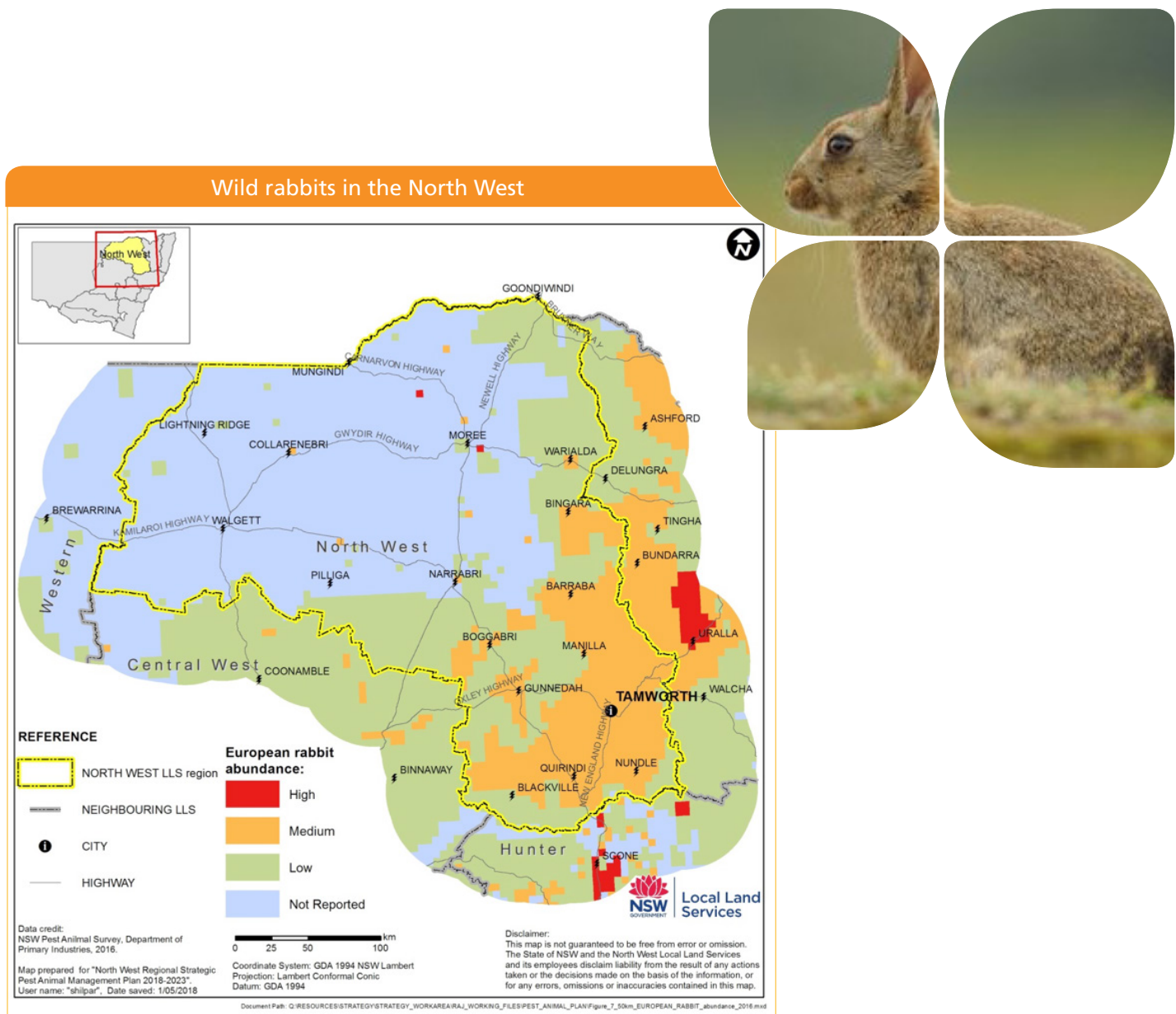


Figure 7 - Wild rabbit distribution in the North West Region



Objective			5 Year Key Performance Indicator	
Reduce regional Rabbit population density			Regional Rabbit population density is reduced by 10% ¹ in active control areas	
All Land Managers are expected to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report rabbit activity, impact and populations Report Myxomatosis and RHDV outbreaks Implement control strategies on their land Remove Rabbit harbour Participate in local control group effort 			What success looks like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Groundcover levels improve in historic Rabbit populated areas Increase in the number of coordinated Rabbit control programs Integrated best practice control methods are used Myxomatosis and RHDV remain active in the Rabbit populations 	
Program name/area	Management category	Assets	Activities & Timeframe	Participants
Whole region	Asset based protection	Livestock, cropping and forestry productions systems. Threatened species and ecological communities	Monitoring & Reporting *Year 1 – Investigate and establish a regional baseline figure for rabbit density. Year 1 – Develop reporting and monitoring system to support annual reporting for rabbit population monitoring. Year 1 to 5 – Collect data and report on regional Rabbit density. <i>*This approach will be reviewed when the State-wide monitoring framework for pests is implemented in 2019 (See Section 6.2.1)</i>	LLS and NSW DPI Landholders
			Control Programs Year 1 to 5 – Implement planned and opportunistic coordinated and integrated control programs at the relevant scale to control Rabbit populations.	Landholders and LLS
			Best Management Practice Year 1 to 5 – Promote and provide best management practice information. Year 1 to 5 – Support new research/trials for improving scientific knowledge on control options and Rabbit impacts.	Landholders, LLS and NSW DPI
			Community Capacity Year 1 to 5 – Conduct target training programs to build the capacity of the community to implement control techniques. Year 1 to 5 – Develop and implement a community engagement strategy for all pest species in the North West region.	All Stakeholders

¹10% figure will be refined after year 1, it is an indicative figure to demonstrate intent

Active control area – implementation of a strategic coordinated control program

Landholder – includes both private and public land managers inclusive of the National Parks & Wildlife Service

3.5 Species – Feral Goat

Feral goats are a major agricultural and environmental pest, but also a commercial resource, providing income to farmers who manage populations for production. Feral goats compete with sheep and some native animals for pasture, contribute to land degradation through grazing and browsing, and impact on biodiversity by damaging the vegetation and competing with native animals. They are also a potential reservoir and vector of endemic and exotic disease.

At present the management of feral goats in the region is primarily through commercial harvesting (mustering and selling). Public land managers will target feral goats during aerial control programs also targeting feral pigs.

Land managers with populations of feral goats are required to limit the impact of those populations on neighbours. Control options available include fencing, mustering for sale and shooting. The mustering of goats for consumption remains a viable opportunity although this can be a volatile market meaning that the feasibility of goat management varies and therefore farming of the species can be opportunistic. The resulting populations can roam and there may be limited incentive to control the species.

Land managers trading in goats within NSW must comply with the requirements under the National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS) for identification and movement documents.

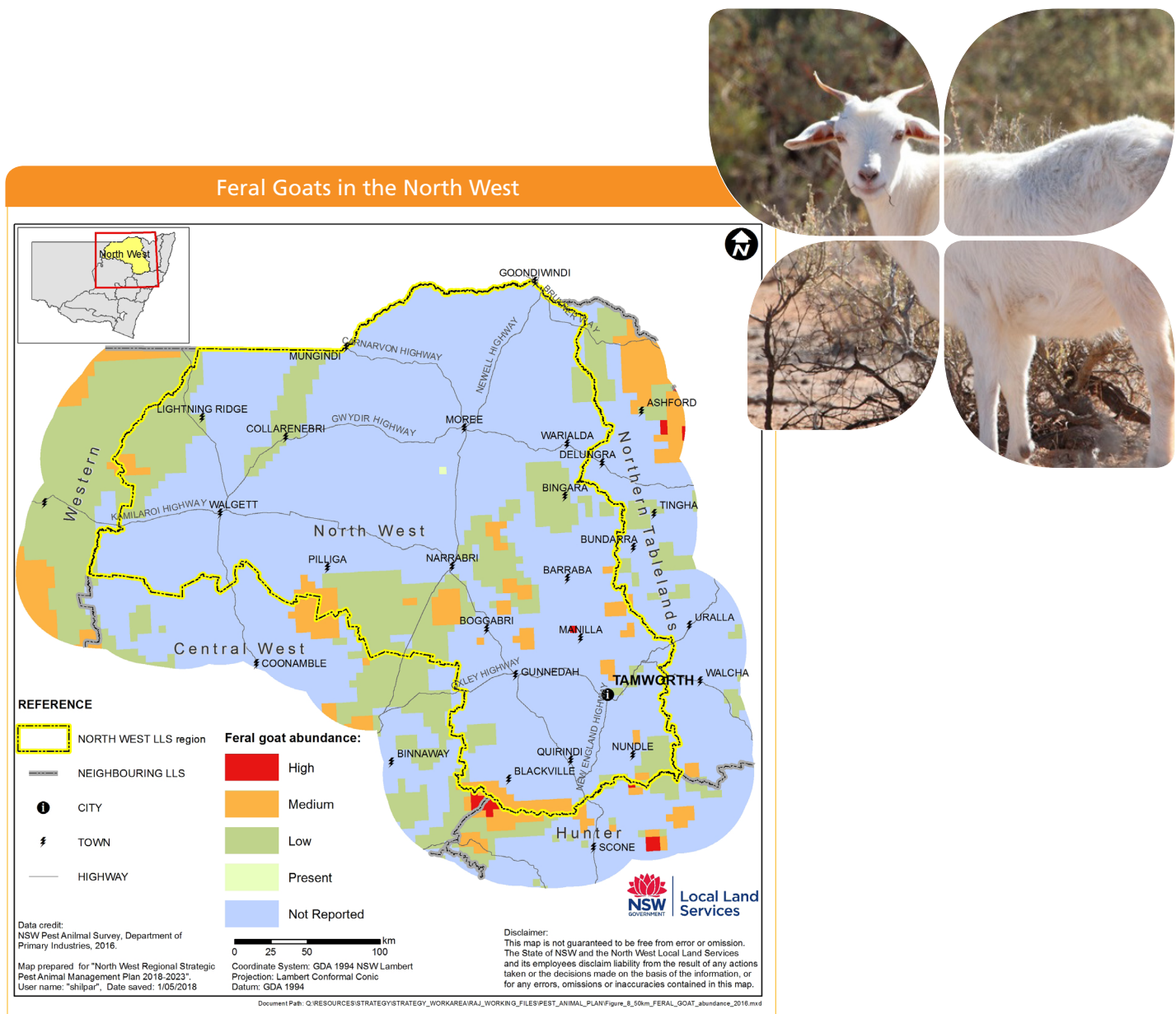


Figure 8 - Feral goat distribution in the North West Region



Objective Reduce unmanaged Feral Goat population density			5 Year Key Performance Indicator Unmanaged Feral Goat population density is reduced by 5% ¹ in active control areas	
All Land Managers are expected to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control unmanaged Feral Goats populations Participate in local control group efforts 			What success looks like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feral Goats are actively harvested Non marketable Feral Goats are destroyed or transitioned to management Opportunistic controls programs are activated when Feral Goat density is high Integrated best practice control methods are used 	
Program name/area	Management category	Assets	Activities & Timeframe	Participants
Whole region	Asset based protection	Livestock, cropping and forestry productions systems. Threatened species and ecological communities	Monitoring & Reporting *Year 1 – Investigate and establish a regional baseline figure for Feral Goat density. Year 1 – Develop reporting and monitoring system to support annual reporting for Feral Goat population monitoring. Year 1 to 5 – Collect data and report on regional Feral Goat density. <i>*This approach will be reviewed when the State-wide monitoring framework for pests is implemented in 2019 (See Section 6.2.1)</i>	LLS and NSW DPI LLS and Landholders
			Control Programs Year 1 to 5 – Ensure compliance with the National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS) when moving or selling Feral Goats. Year 1 to 5 - Implement opportunistic coordinated and integrated control/harvesting programs at the relevant scale to control unmanaged Feral Goat populations.	Landholders and LLS
			Best Management Practice Year 1 to 5 – Promote and provide best management practice information on Feral Goat control and management. Year 1 to 5 – Support new research/trials for improving scientific knowledge on control options and Feral Goat impacts.	Landholders, LLS and NSW DPI
			Community Capacity Year 1 to 5 – Conduct targeted training programs to build the capacity of the community to implement control techniques. Year 1 to 5 – Develop and implement a community engagement strategy for all pest species in the North West region.	All Stakeholders

¹ 10% figure will be refined after year 1, it is an indicative figure to demonstrate intent

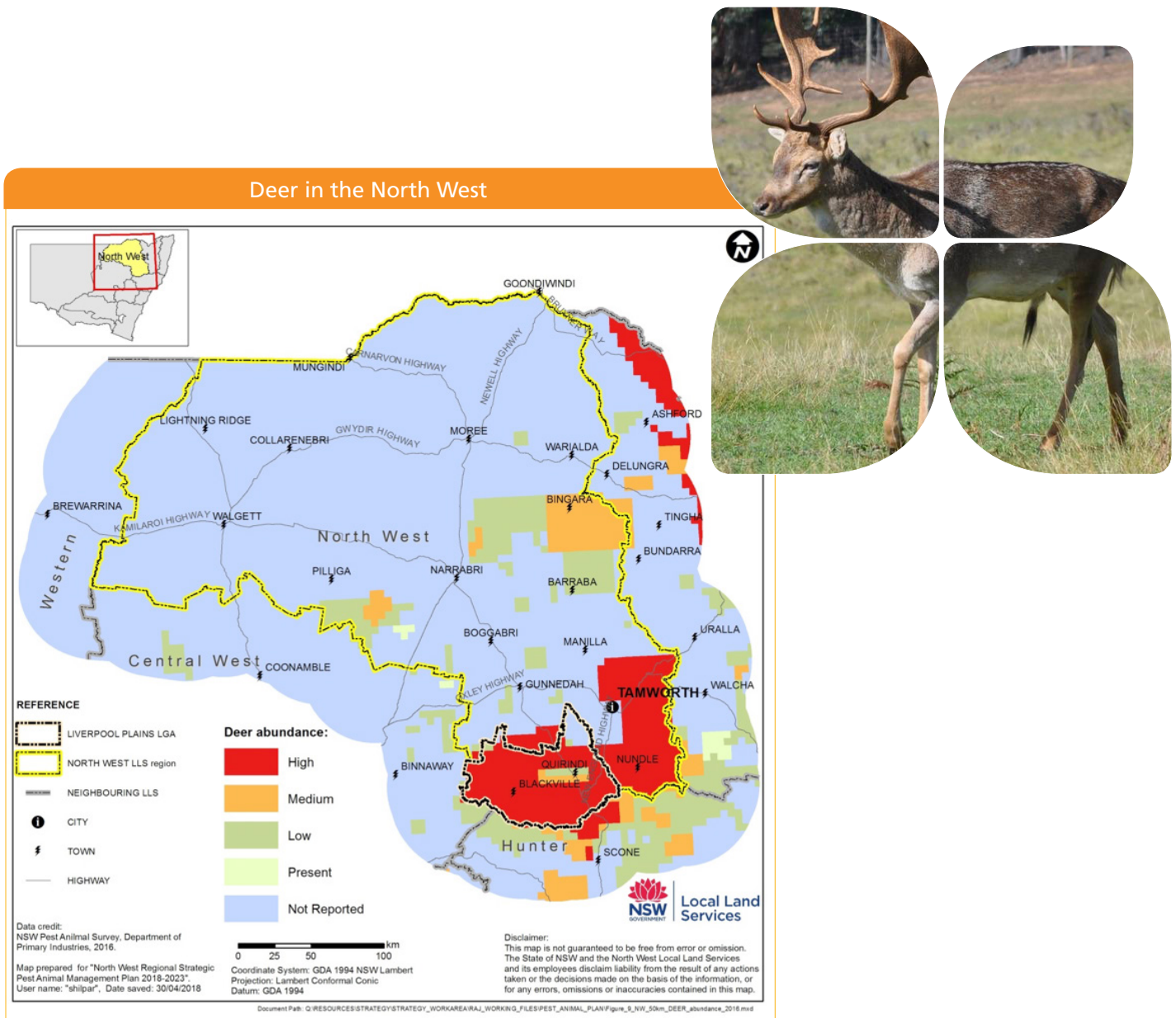
Active control area – implementation of a strategic coordinated control program

Landholder – includes both private and public land managers inclusive of the National Parks & Wildlife Service

3.6 Species – Red, Fallow and Chital Deer

Deer are recognised as part of the RSPAMP due to their increasing impact on the key land use types; grazing, cropping and conservation lands. They can be a potential reservoir and vector of endemic and exotic disease. The impact of deer from grazing competition is considerable as well as the emergence of public safety issues for road users. For these reasons deer have been prioritised as having environmental, economic and social impacts. Shooting remains an integral tool for managing deer as other methodologies such as toxins for widespread use have not been developed. On 2nd June 2017, deer hunting regulations were suspended for the Liverpool Plains LGA. A key activity of the plan is to extend this revocation to all LGA's to allow no seasonal constraints to Deer control.

All landholders who experience deer populations are expected to take reasonable steps to contain that population on their land and limit the impact of that population on their neighbours. The focus of the regional plan is intended to limit further establishment by the species. A key objective of the plan will be to seek to have regulations suspended for all local government areas in the North West.





Objective Establish and maximise a Deer exclusion zone within the region			5 Year Key Performance Indicator Deer exclusion zone implemented by 2023	
All Land Managers are expected to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Report Deer sightingsControl and eliminate Deer in the exclusion zoneControl deer populations on their landParticipate in local control group efforts			What success looks like: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Deer control regulations removed where there are current limitationsDeer exclusion zone mapped within the regionLandholders understand and implement the requirements of the exclusion zone.Deer sightings are actively reportedAdditional suitable control options are available to effectively manage Deer	
Program name/area	Management category	Assets	Activities & Timeframe	Participants
Whole region	Asset based protection	Livestock, cropping and forestry productions systems.	Monitoring & Reporting *Year 1 – Investigate and establish a regional baseline figure for distribution and density. Year 1 – Develop reporting and monitoring system to support annual reporting for Deer population monitoring. Year 1 to 5 – Collect data and report on regional Deer population density. <i>*This approach will be reviewed when the State-wide monitoring framework for pests is implemented in 2019 (See Section 6.2.1)</i>	LLS and NSW DPI LLS and Landholders
Liverpool Plains Local Government Area		Threatened species and ecological communities	Control Programs Year 1 to 5 – Establish an exclusion zone within the region for Deer. Year 1 to 5 - Advocate for Deer control regulations to be revoked across all Local Government Areas within the region. Year 1 to 5 - Implement opportunistic coordinated and integrated control programs at the relevant scale to control existing Deer populations.	LLS Landholders
		Human safety (vehicle collision risk)	Best Management Practice Year 1 to 5 – Promote and provide best management practice information on Deer control and management. Year 1 to 5 – Support new research/trials for improving scientific knowledge on control options and Deer impacts.	All Stakeholders, Landholders & LLS
			Community Capacity Year 1 – Establish a Deer working group to develop a management plan for the Liverpool Plains Local Government Area. Year 1 to 5 – Conduct targeted training programs to build the capacity of the community to implement control techniques. Year 1 to 5 – Develop and implement a community engagement strategy for all pest species in the North West region.	Landholders & LLS
National Park Estate		Threatened species and ecological mmunities	Year 1 to 5 – Ground bating as per the Pesticide Control (1080 Ungulate Feeder) Order 2016.	All Stakeholders

Active control area – implementation of a strategic coordinated control program

Landholder – includes both private and public land managers inclusive of the National Parks & Wildlife Service

3.7 Species – Wild Horses

A small population of wild horses is known to occur in the Pilliga area between the townships of Pilliga and Coonamble. The prioritisation process determined that the species can cause considerable damage to conservation areas and land managers should remove horses via lawful means in those sites where conservation lands are impacted. Further, all land managers have a responsibility to ensure that the species do not impact on neighbouring lands. Neighbouring land managers to this area should report sightings and ensure that the population does not spread.

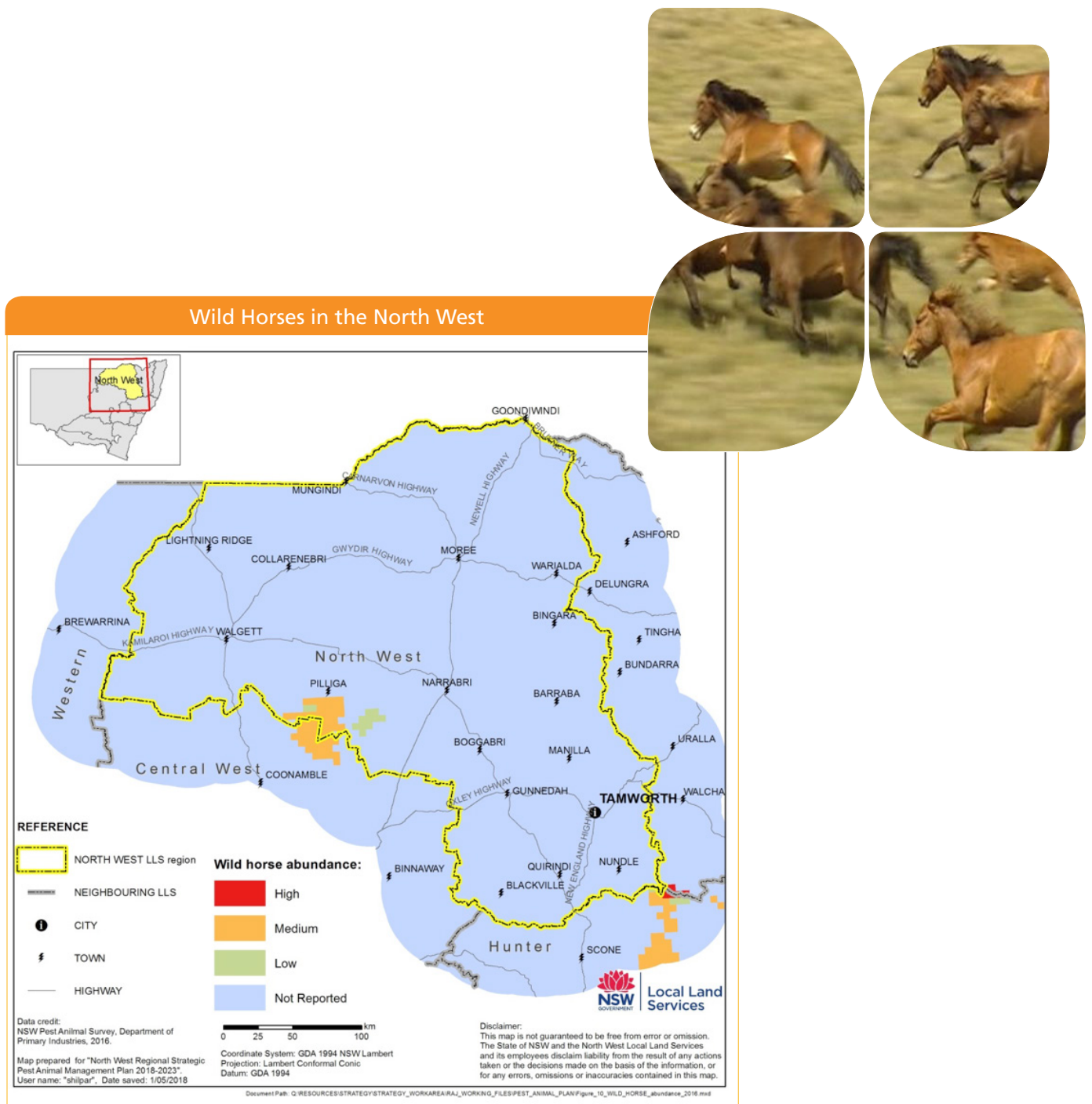


Figure 10: Wild horse distribution in the North West Region



Objective Contain Wild Horse population in the Pilliga area			5 Year Key Performance Indicator No expansion in distribution of the Pilliga Wild Horse population from 2018.	
All Land Managers are expected to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report sightings of new Wild Horse incursions Control new incursions on their land Participate in local control group efforts 			What success looks like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wild Horse vehicle collision risk reduced Social licence established to actively control the Wild Horse population Decrease in population density over time. 	
Program name/area	Management category	Assets	Activities & Timeframe	Participants
Whole region	Containment	Threatened species and ecological communities	Monitoring & Reporting *Year 1 – Investigate and establish a regional baseline figure for Wild Horse distribution and density. Year 1 – Develop reporting and monitoring system to support annual reporting for Wild Horse population monitoring. Year 1 to 5 – Collect data and report on regional Wild Horse population distribution & density. <i>*This approach will be reviewed when the State-wide monitoring framework for pests is implemented in 2019 (See Section 6.2.1)</i>	LLS and NPWS LLS, NPWS & Landholders
			Control Programs Year 1 to 5 - Implement approved Wild Horse control practices.	NPWS & Landholders
		Human safety (vehicle collision risk)	Best Management Practice Year 1 to 5 – Promote and provide best management practice information on Wild Horse control and management. As required – Support new research/trials for improving scientific knowledge on control options and Wild Horse impacts.	Landholders, LLS and NSW DPI
			Community Capacity Year 1 to 5 - Targeted awareness and education program focusing on Wild Horse vehicle collision risk and environmental degradation impacts. Year 1 to 5 – Develop and implement a community engagement strategy for all pest species in the North West region.	All Stakeholders

Active control area – implementation of a strategic coordinated control program

Landholder – includes both private and public land managers inclusive of the National Parks & Wildlife Service

Wild Horse – Undomesticated, unmanaged free ranging horse with no ownership

3.8 Species – Feral Cat

Feral cats are likely to occupy the entire North West Region as they are adaptive to a range of habitats. They are a major threat to our wildlife in terms of predation, as well as posing a significant health risk to livestock, native species and humans through disease transmission (*toxoplasmosis*). A joint partnership between National Parks & Wildlife and the Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) is seeing the development of a 5900ha predator free area for the reintroduction of native species previously extinct from the area. This exclusion area is the only area in the North West that aims to eradicate feral cats and other feral animals from within its boundaries.

At present, control options are limited and this means that landscape scale control is both expensive and limited in effectiveness. Extensive research into effective control options is needed for meaningful management of feral cats. Further strategies to promote responsible pet ownership practices and gather support from the broader community on feral cat control is critical to the success of any control program aimed at reducing feral cat abundance. Working closely with stakeholders such as Local Government will be imperative to manage hot spot areas such as rubbish tips.

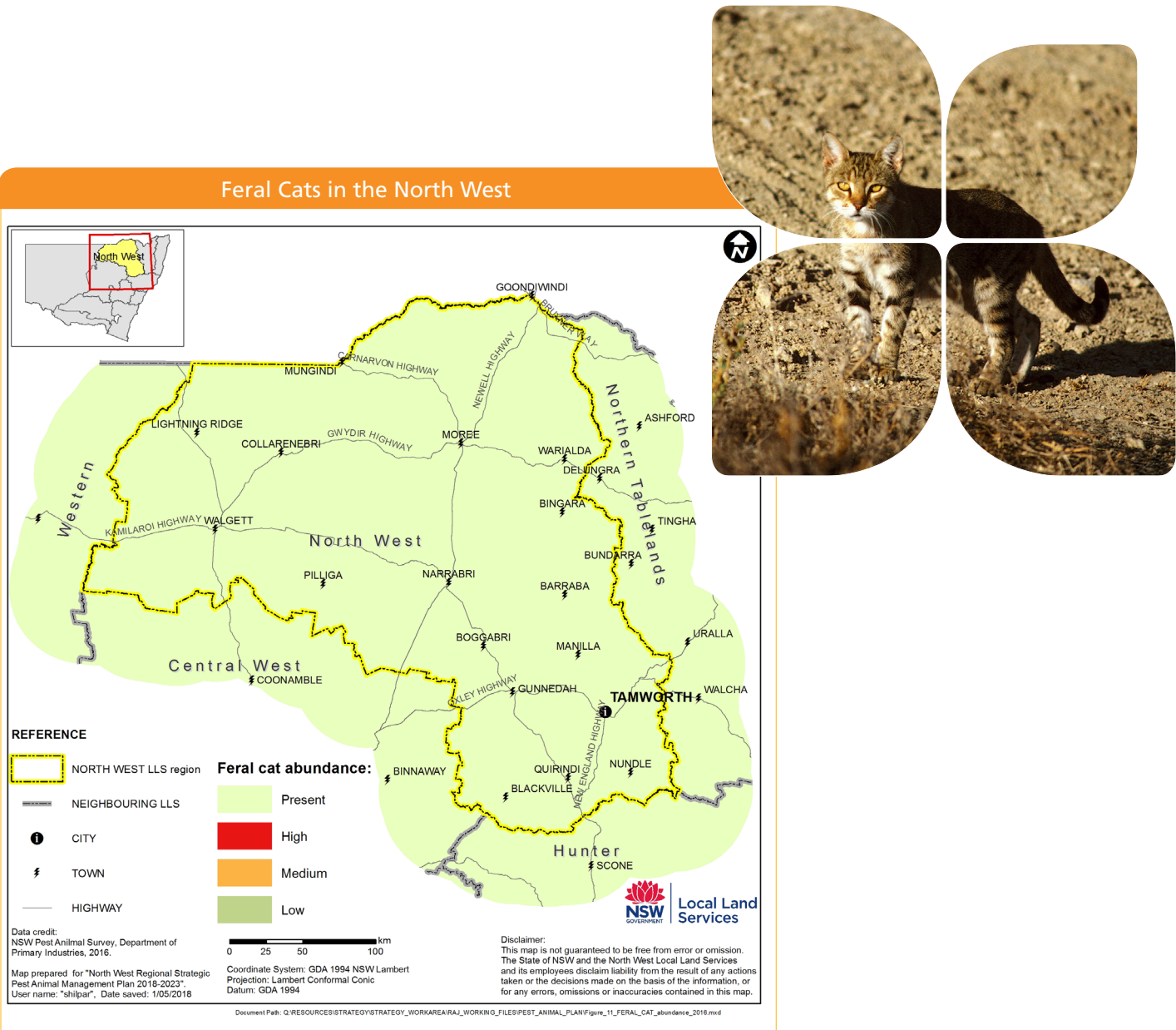
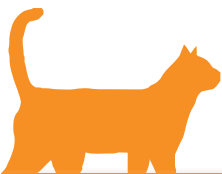


Figure 11: Feral cat distribution in the North West Region



Objective Increase community capacity to control Feral Cats			5 Year Key Performance Indicator Community awareness of Feral Cat impacts is increased by 5%	
All Land Managers are expected to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in de-sexing programs Implement responsible pet ownership Participate in local control group efforts Control Feral Cats on their land 			What success looks like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Government active in managing Feral Cat issues Feral Cat hotspots identified and management programs in place Community has a strong understanding of Feral Cat impacts Integrated best practice control methods are used 	
Program name/area	Management category	Assets	Activities & Timeframe	Participants
Whole region	Asset based protection	Threatened species and ecological communities	Monitoring & Reporting *Year 1 – Investigate and establish a regional baseline figure for Feral Cat community awareness levels. Year 1 – Develop reporting and monitoring system to support annual reporting for Feral Cat community awareness monitoring. Year 3 & 5 – Collect data and report on regional community awareness levels of Feral Cat. <i>*This approach will be reviewed when the State-wide monitoring framework for pests is implemented in 2019 (See Section 6.2.1).</i>	LLS and NSW DPI LLS and Local Government
			Control Programs Year 1 – Identify key Feral Cat hotspots within the region a develop a management strategy. Year 2-5 - Implement Feral Cat hotspot management strategies.	LLS, Local Government & Landholders
			Best Management Practice Year 1 to 5 – Promote and provide best management practice information on Feral Cat control and management. Year 1 to 5 – Support new research/trials for improving scientific knowledge on control options and Feral Cat impact.	Landholders, LLS and NSW DPI
			Community Capacity Year 1 to 5 – Target Feral Cat community awareness programs in partnership with Local Government. Year 1 to 5 – Develop and implement a community engagement strategy for all pest species in the North West region.	All Stakeholders

Active control area – implementation of a strategic coordinated control program

Landholder – includes both private and public land managers inclusive of the National Parks & Wildlife Service

4. Measuring success and continuous improvement

The development and monitoring toward key performance indicators (KPIs) is a critical component of this plan. Monitoring indicators provides information needed to:

- identify priorities for immediate and future management planning
- evaluate previous or current programs (including both control and community engagement activities)
- improve understanding and knowledge about pest animal densities, current and potential range and their current and potential impacts
- raise community awareness of current and potential problems and opportunities for prevention and control.

Objectives and performance indicators are set for each of the pest and programs are outlined in chapter 6.1 below.

4.1 Key Performance Indicators

Key performance indicators (KPIs) have been set to ensure practices are effective and achieving outcomes. These are focussed at a regional scale to ensure the implementation of programs deliver effective outcomes for the pest animals outlined in the plan. State-wide objectives and metrics for key species and goals will be formulated over the next 12 months to ensure a collaboration of regional planning efforts. These state-wide objectives will align with overarching goals and objectives set across plans and will be informed by overarching plans such as the NSW Invasive Species plan and NSW Biosecurity Strategy.

The KPIs set in this plan will be monitored and reviewed annually to ensure targeted progress on key programs and pest animals. This section will address how monitoring and evaluation of the KPIs will take place and the review the plan for continuous improvement.

State-wide KPIs

Providing a coherent story about the impact of the RSPAMPs across the State will require a coordinated Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) framework. This will focus regional MERI programs to targeted evaluations on important outcomes which will be able to be aggregated to a State level to provide information on progress on pest animal density and distribution and its impact on economic, social and environmental issues.

Objective	Indicator	Timeframe
Develop consistent state-wide pest animal data metrics	Metrics are developed and RPACs are reporting on the metrics in a consistent manner	Implemented by July 2019
Develop a consistent MERI process for RSPAMPs	MERI process established to guide monitoring and management of pest animals in NSW for oversight by SPAC	Implemented by July 2019

4.2 Measuring performance

Reporting will occur on an annual basis based on the KPIs identified in this plan. A formal monitoring, evaluation, reporting and investigation process will be implemented by July 2019 to improve regional and state-wide collaboration and reporting on pest animal indicators across NSW. Improved intelligence on key pest animals will lead to more efficient management tools and outcomes.

4.3 Plan review

A mid-term review of this plan will be undertaken at year three (2021) and a full review will be undertaken nearing the end of the five-year term for this plan (2023). Opportunistic reviews outside these timeframes may be initiated by the North West LLS Board.

5. The Biosecurity Act

The *NSW Biosecurity Act 2015* is a new piece of legislation that allows improved management of biosecurity risks in NSW to enable landholders, community, industry and Government effectively manage and respond to biosecurity incursions and risks.

A fundamental principle of the *NSW Biosecurity Act 2015* is that biosecurity is everyone's responsibility. All land managers, regardless of whether on private or public land, have the same responsibilities. Likewise, the general community have a role to play in reducing risks through their activities and as 'eyes and ears' on the lookout for any potential new risks. A general biosecurity duty under the Act requires that anyone who knows or ought to reasonably know about a biosecurity risk has a duty to prevent, eliminate or minimise that risk as far as reasonably practicable.

The *NSW Biosecurity Act 2015* includes a number of mechanisms (regulatory tools) that can be used to manage biosecurity risks such as pest animals in NSW. Landholders, industry and community should be familiar with these tools and what they require of them in their daily practices.

Further information in the NSW Biosecurity legislation can be found at the NSW DPI website - <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/biosecurity-legislation>


Regulatory tools: NSW Biosecurity Act 2015	
Biosecurity Regulation 2017 - Biosecurity Regulation (NLS) 2017 - Biosecurity Order (Permitted Activities) 2017	
 <div>General Biosecurity Duty: Managing the impact and spread of pest animals. <i>E.g. You are discharging your GBD if you are implementing an on-farm biosecurity plan</i></div>	
Biosecurity Management Tools	
PROHIBITED MATTER	Listed in Schedule 2 of the Act. It is an offence to deal with prohibited matter. If a person becomes aware of, or suspects the presence of prohibited matter they have a duty to prevent, eliminate or minimise the risk or potential risk it may cause E.g. Hendra Virus, Foot and mouth Disease, Avian Influenza
CONTROL ORDER	Can be made by the Minister or delegate to establish a control zone, establish measures in connection with a control zone to prevent, eliminate minimise and manage a biosecurity impact. e.g. Disposal of contaminated stock to prevent entering the food chain
PROHIBITED DEALING	A dealing with biosecurity matter described in Schedule 3 of the Act. e.g. Non indigenous animals such as African Pygmy Hedgehog
BIOSECURITY ZONES	A zone established to a premises, specified area or part of the state to prevent, eliminate, minimise or manage a biosecurity risk or impact. Generally used where longer term management is required. e.g. Phyloxera Exclusion Zone in Riverina
BIOSECURITY DIRECTIONS: GENERAL	Issued by an authorised officer to the general public or class of persons e.g. at a sale yard
BIOSECURITY DIRECTIONS: INDIVIDUAL	Issued to a single person by an authorised officer, either orally (followed up in writing within 7 days) or by notice in writing. e.g. A direction to a landholder to implement Foot rot program
BIOSECURITY UNDERTAKINGS	A negotiated set of actions agreed to by an individual and accepted by an authorised officer. Both parties are signatories

Figure 12: Regulatory tools of the Biosecurity Act 2015.

6. Further information

Plan to manage biosecurity risks

This plan can be used by landholders and community members to understand manage and mitigate risks associated pest animal management in the region.

Organisations may choose to apply for funding/allocate resources to support strategic pest animal projects.

The activities outlined in this plan can be used by relevant landholders and community members in the area as guidelines for discharging their general biosecurity duty to improve pest animal management. Pest animal requirements under the **Biosecurity Order Permitted Activities**, which is updated from time to time, should also be considered by landholders and the general community.

Use this plan as a guide to mitigate your risks in your on-farm biosecurity plan to ensure you are effectively managing pest animals in the most effective and efficient manner.

Educate yourself

While this plan sets a benchmark for integrated pest animal management across the region, there are a number of alternative mechanisms that can be used to meet individuals general biosecurity duty and individuals are encouraged to utilise the following resources as well as contact their Local Land Services office for further information.

Resources:

- Local Land Services
- Office of Environment and Heritage (National Parks and Wildlife)
- Department of Primary Industries – Vertebrate Pest Manual
- Invasive Animals CRC
- PestSmart Connect – Model codes of practice and standard operating procedures for pest animals
- FeralScan.

Monitor your environment

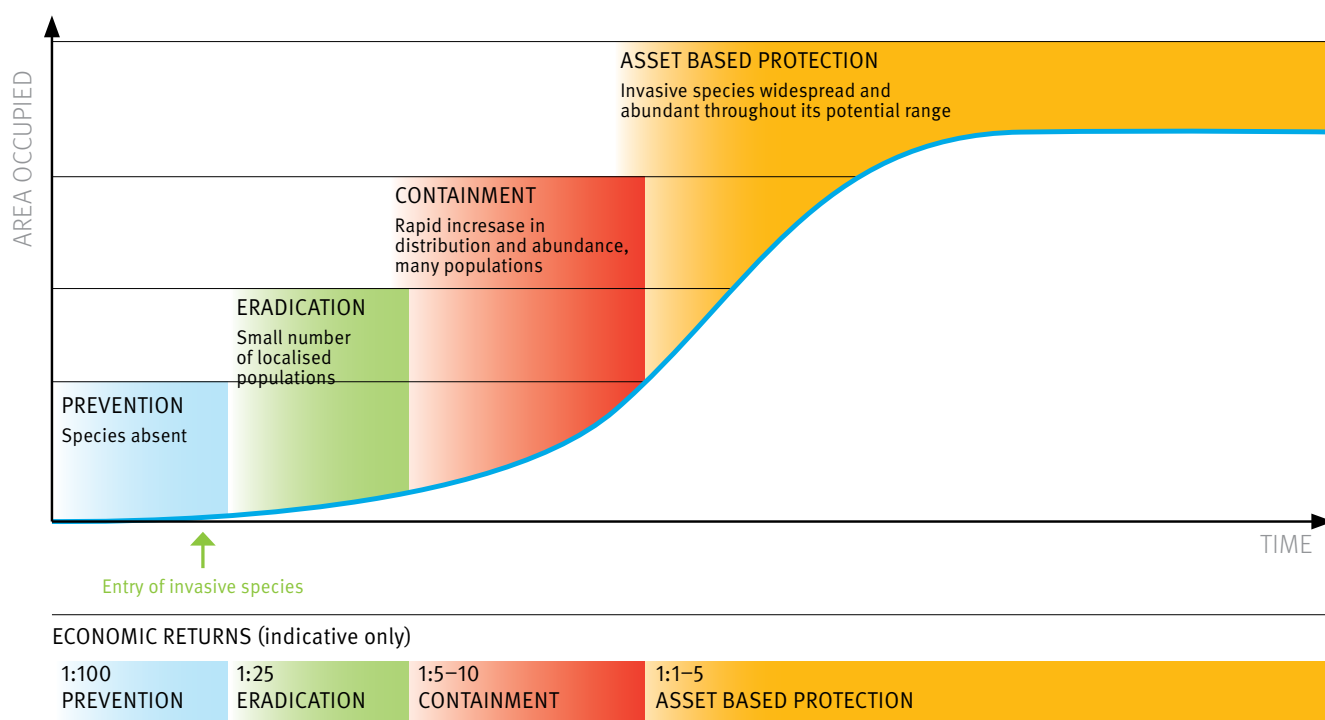
- Be aware of changes in the landscape around you.
- Report anything unusual. If you become aware of unusual animals in the wrong place or illegal activities such as the movement, keeping, breeding and sale of controlled category nonindigenous animals, report it as soon as possible
- Discuss ongoing monitoring programs and techniques with Local Land Services.
- Ensure you keep up to date with any Government and industry changes.
- Comply
- Ensure you meet the requirements set out in both your on-farm biosecurity plan and any other on farm biosecurity plans for properties you deal with.
- Ensure you are aware of and comply with specific legislation for pest animals.

Appendix 1: Prioritisation process

Public and private land managers have limited resources to manage pest animals and it is therefore important to prioritise activities. Important considerations for prioritisation are:

- It is generally more cost-effective to prevent the establishment of pest animals into new areas through prevention and early intervention (eradication or containment of small isolated populations) than to have to fund ongoing management of established species (see Figure 1).
- For established species, resources should focus on managing the pest animals and areas where there is the greatest impact on a valued 'asset' (e.g. protecting an endangered native animal from fox predation or a sheep production area from wild dogs) – this is known as 'Asset-based Protection'.
- The feasibility of management needs to be considered and this will depend on the availability of approved cost-effective control techniques and any biogeographic limitations (e.g. difficult terrain or potential impact of control techniques on non-target species).

Generalised invasion curve showing actions appropriate to each stage



*Invasion Curve sourced from Biosecurity Victoria, Department of Primary Industries, Victoria

Figure 13: The 'Invasion Curve', showing the importance of allocating resources to prevent the establishment of new pests. (Agriculture Victoria)

In developing lists of priority pest animals and management areas, RPAMPs have considered the South Australian Pest Animal Risk Management Guide and prioritisation tool:

http://pir.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/254222/SA_pest_animal_risk_assessment_guide_Sept2010.pdf

The South Australian prioritisation tool accounts for pest animal impacts and the feasibility of effectively reducing those impacts and allocates management of particular pest animals in particular areas into one of four categories: Limited Action, Asset-based Protection, Containment or Eradication.

'Limited Action' will be the likely management approach for introduced species that aren't considered to have a significant impact in a particular area and/or for which there is currently a lack of effective management options. There are 64 terrestrial and freshwater aquatic exotic vertebrates that have established wild populations in NSW however, many of these will fall into the 'Limited Action' category and the focus of RPAMPs will be on a much smaller list of high priority pest impacts.

'Eradication' or 'Containment' are generally only realistic management options for new incursions and small isolated populations of species where this is a good selection of control techniques available.