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fact sheet

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Building capacity for change

Bugilbone Ridge Feral Pig Management Group

Cotton growers working together for a sustainable landscape: Namoi Valley Case study.

Snapshot of project achievements:

- 15 landholders managing feral pests on farm
- 66,000 hectares of landscape under best practise including 13,000ha of endangered Coolibah Black box Woodland Community
- 122 farmers with improved natural resource management knowledge and skills

Bugilbone Ridge Feral Pig Management

In the Namoi Valley a pilot project has trialled exciting new ways to engage growers and their families in managing natural vegetation on their farms under best practice. A series of workshops were held around native vegetation management with over a 100 landholders attending them. As part of the workshops participants undertook landscape planning, identifying native vegetation management issues within their local area. One of the key issues raised was the negative impact feral animals such as pigs and foxes were having on agriculture productivity as well as local biodiversity. As a result a local feral pig management group was formed.

The Bugilbone Ridge Feral Pig Management Group

The Bugilbone Feral Pig Management group consists of 15 landholders whose combined properties cover an area of approximately 66,000ha. Of this 66,000ha an estimated 13,000ha is the endangered Coolibah Black Box Woodland Community. There are a number



Cotton growers Johann Osthuizen and Sam Powell with Lauren Wilson from the Namoi CMA and Jamie Maddocks from North West LHPA at a pig baiting workshop.

of threatening processes to this community including feral animals such as pigs which can destroy ground layer plants and shrubs and introduce weeds, pigs are a known vector for boxthorn spread.

The Bugilbone Feral Pig Management Group alongside the Namoi Catchment Management Authority and the LHPA Livestock Health and Pest Authority developed a long term plan (5 years) for the management of feral pigs. The objective of the plan was to provide landholders in the Bugilbone Ridge area with the tools and skills needed to reduce the impacts that feral pigs were having on local agriculture as well as the native vegetation communities within the Bugilbone Ridge area.

The key outcomes from the plan include:

- Co-ordinated approach to feral pig control between neighbouring landholders and local agencies
- Landholder training in techniques for feral pig control;
- Implementation of on-ground activities to reduce feral pig abundance;
- Monitoring of pig impacts on agriculture and native vegetation; and evaluation of the effectiveness of implemented control methods in reducing impacts;
- Reduced impact by pigs on local agriculture and native vegetation; and
- Development of a long term strategic plan for feral pig management.

What has been achieved

The first year of the plan has been implemented with the following activities undertaken:

- Delivery of a training workshop on different feral pig control techniques;
- Two aerial shoots with an estimated 1,964 pigs shot;
- Trapping and ground shooting;
- Two cotton growers undertaking baiting for the first time;
- Monitoring and benchmarking of native vegetation health on five participating farms; and
- Development and implementation of a five year management plan for feral pig control.

Lessons learnt

The project has been very successful in helping build the capacity amongst local landholders to take a co-ordinated approach to native vegetation management issues. Johann Osthuizen (pictured front page) believes working together with other farmers is the most effective way of tackling the pig problem: *“If it’s only you baiting, the pigs will just come in again from neighbouring properties.”*

Jamie Maddocks, Pest Animal Ranger for the North West LHPA said: *“the project has probably been one*

of the most successful control projects I’ve seen, with a very high level of landholder engagement.”

As well as reducing the number of feral pigs and their impacts on local agricultural and biodiversity, their has been a number of other significant outcomes which have contributed to the potential improved health of biodiversity such as:

- Engaging with landholders we previously had not worked with, developing a relationship and trust
- Providing advice to landholders on a range of other NRM issues while on farm such as weed control and riparian management.



Map of project area with inset map of cotton growing areas.

Acknowledgements

The *Cotton Growers Working together for a Sustainable Landscape* project has brought growers together to contribute to the ongoing conservation and protection of biodiversity in their districts. This project was supported by the Cotton Research and Development Corporation, through funding from the Australian Government and the Namoi Catchment Management Authority and North West Livestock Health and Pest Authority.

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