



TRAPPING TO CONTROL FERAL PIGS

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Trapping is an effective technique to reduce feral pigs on Kangaroo Island properties, where feral pig numbers are low and the property is small (compared with other parts of Australia). It can be used to ‘mop up’ survivors from poisoning programs and is most successful when natural food resources are limited. The Board has traps for hire and can provide technical assistance.

Advantages of trapping

Trapping is the safest form of controlling feral pigs and can be undertaken in closely populated areas.

- It is a humane technique.
- Normal feral pig behaviour is not altered, improving your chances of removing a greater number of the total population in your area.
- Pig carcasses can be disposed of safely without non-target species being affected.
- Trapping can be incorporated into routine property activities, making economical use of labour and materials.
- Traps can be removed and re-used wherever feral pig activity arises on a property.

Images below:

Left: Feral pigs grazing KI farmland.

Right: Captured feral pigs. (KI NRM Board)

Disadvantages of trapping

Trapping can be time consuming and traps can be expensive to construct and maintain. Traps need to be checked regularly and some feral pigs may be trap shy.

How to trap for feral pigs

1. Select a good trap site

- Place trapping sites where feral pigs are active (i.e. water points, holes in fences and areas where feral pigs have been feeding).
- Locate the trap away from areas accessible to domestic stock.
- Build the trap on flat ground to ensure secure gate closure.
- If building a permanent trap, select an area consistently used by feral pigs so the trap can be pre-baited and re-activated when fresh signs of feral pigs appear.

2. Chose a trap design to suit your site and budget

There are several trap designs. Most consist of an enclosed area with one-way gates. The main area of the trap can be any shape and made from a variety of materials. However, the best material to use is steel mesh with a grid size of 100 x 100 mm, and a minimum height of at least 1.5 m.



Place star pickets at least 1.5 m apart around the trap and imbed them far enough into the ground so that adult feral pigs cannot push them over or lift them up out of the ground. Use panels of a size that is convenient to transport and handle. Ensure your traps are very robust and strongly anchored into the ground to prevent feral adult pigs pushing them over and escaping.

Swing gate entrance

Traps with swing gates are the most successful on KI. The gate is hinged at the top and falls shut after feral pigs have activated it under their own weight (Figure 1). A stick attached to the back or sides of the trap by string is generally used to hold the gate open. When feral pigs nudge around after the bait they set the gate off, enclosing themselves within the trap. The trap can still be opened by feral pigs from the outside but not from the inside, therefore allowing more feral pigs to move into the trap but none to escape.

Funnel entrance

This entrance is formed by two ends of mesh to make a funnel. The ends are tied together at the top with wire or rope. The feral pig moves through the funnel forcing the bottom of the mesh ends apart and once it is in the trap the ends spring back together (Figure 2).

Side-hinged gate entrance

A side-hinged gate is pulled shut by springs and is held open by different systems that trigger the gate to swing shut (Figure 3). Often trip wires are used, but many other systems have been tried. Most of these systems are not selective for feral pigs and can be triggered by any animal attracted to the bait.

Once triggered the trap is no longer effective for trapping feral pigs.

3. Prepare your site

- Stop all activities at the chosen site that disturb normal feral pig feeding patterns (i.e. do not undertake any shooting or dogging).
- Begin free feeding before the trap is constructed to determine if feral pigs are currently in the area and to get them used to the bait that will be used in the activated trap. Use fermented grains (grain soaked for a couple of days), carrion and molasses.
- Build the trap around the feeding site, distributing food both inside and outside of the trap for several nights before it is set. Begin by partially constructing the trap; for example if the trap has four sides build the first three, feed in and around the trap for a couple of days and then add the fourth side and the gate (but begin with it open).

4. Begin trapping

- Once the pigs have become used to moving in and out of the trap, activate the gate and begin trapping. Set the trap every night and check each day. If the trap cannot be checked daily then provide shade and water.
- Continue trapping until no more pigs are caught. Try changing the bait and again, feed for one or two nights with the new bait before re-setting the trap.
- Traps may be left permanently in locations used by feral pigs and can be pre-baited and activated when fresh signs of them appear.
- If moving the trap, start feeding at the new site before re-locating it.

Figures below: 1. Trap with swing gate entrance. 2. Trap with funnel entrance. 3. Trap with side-hinged gate entrance. (www.dpi.qld.gov.au)

