



Feral pig free-feeding

By Gary Martin, Ted Knight and David Lund.

Free-feeding is an essential part of a feral pig poisoning or trapping program. The aim of free-feeding is to encourage pigs to feed readily on the bait material (pre-feed) at sites selected for poisoning and to encourage pigs to become accustomed to traps prior to trapping.

This farmnote is designed to assist landholders to undertake free-feeding of feral pigs prior to the laying of 1080-poisoned bait. For information on free-feeding of feral pigs prior to trapping see Farmnote 'Feral Pig Control by Trapping'. Free-feeding (and poisoning/trapping) of feral pigs is generally best undertaken during periods of food shortage (after harvest), which usually equates to January – March in most years.

To ensure that the maximum number of pigs is attracted to the site, free-feeding should be continued until the amount of pre-feed consumed has peaked, usually two to four days after pigs begin to take food. If free-feeding is not carried out properly there is little chance of poisoning all of the pigs in an area, and survivors may avoid poisoned bait in the future. It is better to free-feed at one or two sites with known pig activity than to free-feed at many sites where the activity of the pigs is uncertain.

Ensure 1080 bait will be available

Before commencing your free-feeding and poisoning program you must ensure that 1080 can be mixed and laid on your property. The 1080 poison used for feral pigs is '1080 Concentrate Black'.

Can 1080 be laid on your property?

You must submit a 1080 Baiting Application Form (available from the Department of Agriculture) to an authorised officer of the Department of Agriculture. The officer will carry out a risk assessment of the proposed baiting and, if approval is given, will issue an Approval Form and a 1080 Authorisation Voucher. The voucher will enable the nominated person to receive the approved quantity of 1080 Concentrate Black.

Who can receive and mix the baits?

Only Licensed Pest Control Operators (LPCOs) specifically endorsed by the Department of Health to mix 1080 Concentrate Black and authorised officers of the Department of Agriculture can receive and mix the poison on your behalf.

On the application form you can nominate the LPCO who will be receiving 1080 Concentrate Black and mixing the bait. Alternatively, if there is not an endorsed LPCO in/near your area, you may nominate a Department of Agriculture officer to receive and mix the bait.

Who can lay the baits?

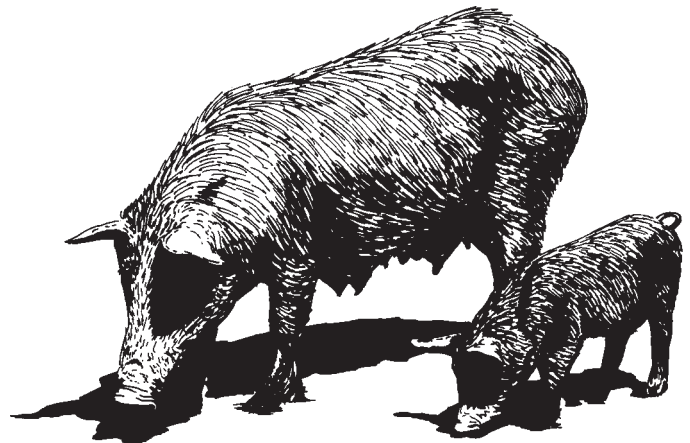
After mixing, the 1080 bait can be laid by the LPCO or by yourself if you have received appropriate training from the Department of Agriculture. You may also choose to contract an officer from the Department of Agriculture to lay the bait.

Select free-feed sites

Sites should be in, or close to, areas of recent pig activity. Such sites include pig pads, areas of thick cover, creeks and swamp edges. Choose sites with adequate access, since you may need to carry in large amounts of pre-feed. When poisoning, it is important to have the free-feeding area approved by an authorised officer as part of the initial 1080 risk assessment.

Free-feed

Although the acceptability of feed types often varies between pigs, regions and seasons, suitable feedstuffs include: clean high quality grain (wheat, barley oats; no 'seconds'), lupins and pig pellets. It is important to use the same food material throughout the program whether as pre-feed or poisoned bait.



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Start by placing the pre-feed in 6 - 10 heaps, each of about 1 kg, at each site. Sheltered areas should be used to minimize the effects of weather and disturbance by non-target animals.

Monitor feeding activity

Check the free-feed sites daily to assess the amount of pre-feed consumed and to ensure that it is not being taken by non-target animals. Replace any eaten pre-feed. If all pre-feed has been taken, put out double the quantity next time. Always try to provide a surplus of pre-feed, so that the amount of poisoned bait required for the poisoning program can be estimated.

The poisoned bait should be laid when the amount of pre-feed taken has peaked; this usually takes from two to four days, sometimes longer. Since your local LPCO or authorised departmental officer must mix the bait, contact them beforehand to inform them on the success

of free-feeding (amount taken, assessment of the number of pigs).

N.B. During free-feeding, try not to disturb the pigs. Although pigs may become quite tame during feeding, they will be easily dispersed. Shooting should be avoided and visits to the free-feeding sites should be as brief as possible. The presence (scent) of dogs in the area prior to baiting may deter pigs from visiting the site again. Therefore, ensure that any dogs are kept away from the sites until baiting has been completed. This will also ensure that your dogs are not accidentally poisoned during the poisoning phase.

Further information

Contact your nearest office of the Department of Agriculture or the South Perth office on tel. 9368 3333.

There are a number of publications on pigs available from departmental offices or on the website.