

# BOUNTY PLAN TESTED

## Big yield from NSW Farmers feral pig management trial

A NSW feral pig bounty trial in January yielded 1427 pigs from a 51,869ha trial site in the Tottenham area in a result the Tottenham branch of NSW Farmers hope will elevate the bounty debate to the top of the pig management agenda.

NSW Farmers member Ben Nicholls said the trial had shown a bounty system had real potential to complement the success of Local Land Services programs by actively ramping up pressure on feral pigs simultaneously across the State.

He said a bounty of \$20 per pig snout would “invigorate people already out there, know the area where the pigs are and how to catch them”.

“There is an army of such people out in the regions, let’s make use of them.”

The trial was a joint operation involving NSW Farmers Tottenham branch and the Australian Pig Doggers and Hunters Association and was prompted by an October 2024 NSW Farmers State Executive resolution “that the NSW State Government, through the LLS, initiate a feral pig bounty of \$20 per pig...to incentivise professional and licensed recreational hunters to help dramatically reduce the feral pig population”.

The nine locally based APDHA hunters tasked with the job were asked to work as though they were in line to collect \$20 per snout from pigs killed legally and humanely using any legal hunting method including shooting, trapping and the use of dogs to locate and contain pigs for safe destruction.

Mr Nicholls said many of the pigs killed in the trial were in the same area as a Local Lands Services helicopter shoot 14 months ago (2290 pigs shot on 300,522ha or 1 pig per 131ha).

“This emphasises, without continual hunting pressure the pigs breed up or move in from surrounding areas to repopulate helicopter-controlled areas quickly.”

APDHA National President Ned Makim said the organisation welcomed the chance to support NSW Farmers but was at pains to say the project was not to attack existing control methods.

“Hunters aren’t the solution but are demonstrably part of the solution and have the capacity to maintain constant pressure on populations, especially with a small payment to help cover their costs.

Mr Nicholls said a bounty would allow participants to invest in better equipment including thermal imaging gear and trapping materials.

Mr Makim agreed saying APDHA research had estimated an average cost to hunters of \$60.67 per pig.

“We are convinced a \$20 bounty return on each pig would increase hunter activity and effectiveness.

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“You have to understand how pig hunters think. They want to hunt and they want to hunt often. However, cost is a factor and some assistance in that will keep them out longer and more often. It is also very likely more hunters will set and manage traps.”

The bounty trial model included nine APDHA insured hunters.

They were asked to:

- Hunt as though a \$20 bounty per pig would be paid.
- Remove and salt pig snouts to verify numbers claimed.
- Hunt ethically and humanely (as per the law and the APDHA Code of Conduct).
- Have verifiable legal property access.
- Keep records of pig numbers, sex and whether or not pigs were of breeding age.

Mr Nicholls said the data collected was to model the intelligence that could be gathered on the feral pig population in real time as hunters would be required to provide PIC (Property Identification Code) numbers to collect any bounty.

The bounty concept also encouraged the taking of pigs of any size to help quickly reduce the overall population.

“Last but not least is biosecurity. We would have constant up to date intelligence on where the pigs are and have a greatly reduced feral pig population to control disease such as with an outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease,” Mr Nicholls said.

Mr Makim said the bounty data (and snouts) backed up the shift in focus with a higher percentage of sows and non-breeding aged pigs recorded than the existing data would have predicted.

Comparative results		
	Bounty Trial	LLS Program
Time span:	January 2025	July to December 2024
Pigs killed:	1427	33,058
Area:	51,869ha	4,030,333
Ha/pig:	36.35ha/1pig	122ha/1pig
Cost:	\$28,540 (notional)	\$6,550,000 (half full budget)
Cost per pig:	\$20	\$198



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