Animal welfare considerations

A well thought out control program should minimise any animal suffering associated with the program.

Check traps every morning. Any native animals caught in the trap should be released in-situ provided there is no obvious injury. A feral animal caught in the trap should be euthanased in a humane manner, if it is necessary to move the trap and animal then cover with a hessian sack or similar to minimise distress.

If a lactating female is caught in the trap then all efforts should be made to locate and euthanase the young.

If possible traps should be located where some shade can be offered by vegetation.

Any cats caught should be confirmed as feral. This is made easier in areas where registration of pet cats is compulsory.

Final considerations

Foxes and feral cats are highly mobile animals and establishing a community wide baiting program will encourage control of the fox and feral cat populations over a larger area. This will help to limit re-invasion and is far more cost effective in the long run.

Further info

www.agric.wa.gov.au
Lots of information from DAFWA, including the comprehensive Farmnote series.
www.capetocape.org.au
Website of the Cape to Cape Catchments Group; contains further information on feral animals and other projects which the group are involved with in the Capes region.
www.dec.wa.gov.au
www.feral.org.au

References

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) (2008). *Threat abatement plan for predation by feral cats,* DEWHA, Canberra.

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) (2008). *Threat abatement plan for predation by the European red fox,* DEWHA, Canberra.

Thanks to:

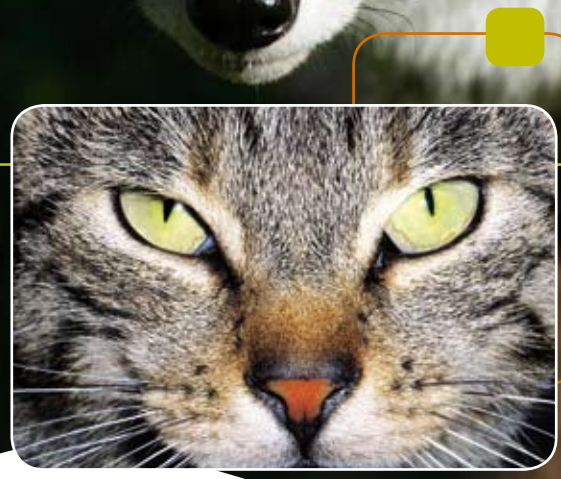
Mike Butcher; Animal Pest Management Services
David Hill; DAFWA

Cape to Cape Catchments Group

SWCC south west catchments council

CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY

A GUIDE to FOX and FERAL CAT CONTROL



Cape to Cape Catchments Group

'Our Environment - Our Future'

Baiting with 1080

What is 1080?

1080 or sodium fluroacetate is a naturally occurring toxin found in high concentrations in gastrolobium plants of SW WA. Native animals have evolved a tolerance to its effects but non-natives such as the fox and feral cat have a very low tolerance to 1080 and the ingestion of low concentrations is fatal. Non-target animals such as agricultural stock and pets are particularly susceptible, and the use of 1080 is highly regulated by the Department of Agriculture and Food (DAFWA).

A landholder wishing to control foxes using 1080 has two options; using a licensed contractor to lay the baits or becoming accredited to lay the baits themselves.

Landholder 1080 Accreditation

- Read through 'Landholder Information for the Safe Use and Management of 1080' found on DAFWA website
- 20 multiple choice questions set by DAFWA for completion by landholder
- Landholder accredited

Contractor baiting

- Complete 1080 Product Request Form
- Property assessed for suitability by DAFWA

Property not suitable

- Consider one of the other control options

Property suitable

- 1080 permit sent to landholder & contractor if applicable

Fumigation of fox dens

Carbon monoxide is the only fumigant registered for foxes. It is a humane method of dealing with foxes, causing unconsciousness and death without pain. The cartridge is lit, inserted into the den and the den entrance covered in soil.

Fox cubs are only fully susceptible to CO effects from the age of 4 weeks so avoid fumigation prior to this. Care should also be taken to ensure that the animals are not directly exposed to the high temperatures resulting from the combustion of the CO cartridge.

Tips for trapping success

There are some basic tips which will increase the chance of successfully capturing a fox or feral cat.

Before beginning the control program it is important to formulate a plan for humanely dealing with the fox or cat when one is caught in a trap. This plan can then be implemented with a minimum of fuss and distress for the animal.

- Type: cage traps have a spring door which can be activated by a treadle plate or hook mechanism. Younger cats are more successfully trapped in a treadle plate trap which does not rely on height and strength to trigger the mechanism. The size of the trap is important; a fox trap must be large enough to contain the whole fox, including its tail.
- Location: traps should be located in areas where foxes or feral cats are known to be active. Position the trap so that the animal has easy access. The floor of the trap should be covered with sand or dirt. Neither the fox nor feral cat will like to enter a trap if they can feel the cage wire under their feet.
- Food/bait: the food used must be fresh as the smell of rotting food will dissuade both foxes and feral cats from going near the trap. Rabbit, chicken, beef, sardines and kangaroo have been successfully used as bait for both animals.
- Free-feeding: It is important to 'free-feed' a fox prior to setting the trap. Leave food outside the trap for a number of days allowing the fox to become familiar with the trap. Next move the bait inside the trap but without setting the mechanism. Continue for an additional few days before attaching the food and setting the mechanism.
- Setting the trap: the trap should be set at dusk and unset the following morning. This reduces the chances of non-target animals being caught in the trap. Set the trap door mechanism and test to ensure the door doesn't snag. A snagging door may allow the animal to escape and make it harder to catch in future.

Monitor the success

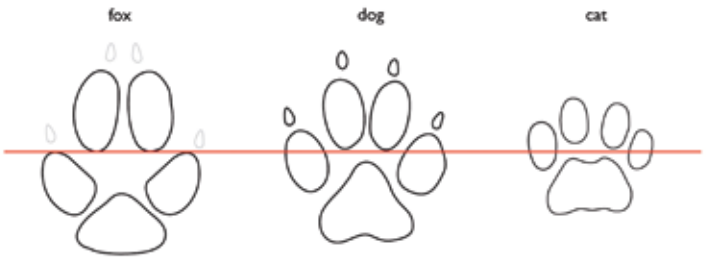
It is unfeasible to expect a control program to eradicate all feral animals in an area. The aim is to reduce the size of feral animal populations to an extent that the impact on lambs, poultry or native wildlife is radically reduced ie that the initial reason for implementing the control plan, the 'WHAT' has been addressed.

To monitor the success of a control program it is important to assess two factors:

1. The effectiveness of the control method. Does the trap need to be placed some where else? Are the 1080 baits being taken or is there a more suitable area? Would a different bait type work more effectively? Assessing these basics allows improvements to be made.
2. The impact the control program is having on native species, lambs or poultry. Are the target populations increasing in size / is predation reducing?

Digital motion sensitive cameras are useful for monitoring the animals present in an area. The Cape to Cape Catchments Group has a number of cameras which landholders can borrow for this purpose. Sand pads are a cheap and low tech way of capturing tracks and getting a glimpse of what is passing through.

Paw print features of introduced predators



Why control foxes and feral cats?

The red fox is a serious predator of lambs and domestic poultry and foxes were initially controlled because of their impact on agriculture. Research has since shown that both the fox and feral cat are also responsible for the declining populations of a number of native animals (DEWHA, 2008).

Not having evolved in the presence of these efficient predators, native animals have few predation avoidance strategies. In addition cat predation may also expose natives to Toxoplasmosis infection, a disease carried by cats.

Threatened species which have been impacted in this area include the Southern brown bandicoot, Chuditch and Western ringtail possum.

Photo: Troy Coates FPaW/LFW

Options for control

What works for foxes	
1080 baiting	the most effective method of controlling foxes
Trapping	a useful alternative in areas where 1080 is not permitted or is unfeasible
Fumigation	fumigation of active fox dens with CO can be very effective
Shooting	should only be carried out by an experienced shooter
What works for feral cats	
1080 baiting	relatively ineffective, feral cats have a large home range and are disinclined to feed on carrion unless other food sources are rare
Trapping	feral cats can be trap shy so patience is essential
Shooting	should only be carried out by an experienced shooter

Planning the control

Unless the control is well planned and coordinated across an area it is unlikely to have a long-lasting effect. The following points should be considered:

WHAT is the problem? It may be that a range of solutions are needed, not just the control of feral animals

WHICH feral animal is causing the problem? Different options are available and the most suitable control method should be used

WHO will be tackling the problem; is there an option to widen the scope to include neighbours?

TIMING the control: Fox control is most effective during late winter/spring. Food demands are high at this time due to the rearing of young. Foxes are also less mobile, so delaying reinfestation of an area. Repeat control programs will be needed at other times.

Feral cats are not seasonally restricted and can breed in any season.