



CAPABILITY STATEMENT | Vertebrate Pest Management



Vertebrate Pests

Vertebrate pests are classed as feral animals with a backbone; typically, the management and control of these pests are more technical and intensive than control of invertebrate pests. Vertebrate pests have an adverse impact on agriculture in rural areas as well as the natural environment in urban areas by preying on native fauna and impacting the ecological balance of the ecosystem. The Department of Agriculture and Food in WA manages pests in Western Australia through policy development, risk assessment, research and development, provision of technical advice and information, implementation of regulation, emergency response, property inspections, industry liaison, and the planning and coordination of significant species control/eradication programs.

Serious Vertebrate Pests

The most common vertebrate pests in urban areas are the European Fox (*Vulpes Vulpes*), Feral cat (*Felis catus*) and the European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*); each has a unique impact on native flora and fauna.

Foxes and cats are notorious for their predation on native animals such as small marsupials, reptiles, amphibians and birds and are the main reason for the decline and extinction of many small and medium-sized rodent and marsupial species across Australia. Foxes and cats are also known to prey on eggs and hatchlings. This leads to a decrease in the local biodiversity with populations of native animals slowly decreasing as a result.

Rabbits contribute to the erosion and de-stabilisation of the land through the excavation of their warrens and the destruction of habitat by overgrazing. Rabbits are known to graze on native plants, particularly small non-woody seedlings often used on revegetation sites.

Vertebrate Pest Management

Natural Area can offer a range of VPM services, from the development of feral animal management plans, monitoring for feral animal activity, to implementation of management actions.

There are a variety of techniques used to control pest populations which Natural Area can provide:

- **Baiting** – foxes can be targeted with baits impregnated with 1080. 1080 is a naturally occurring poison found in some Australian plants – *Gastrolobium sp.* Native animals have evolved with a resistance to 1080 but invasive animals are susceptible to the poison. Programs include surveying, marking and checking bait stations. Rabbits can be targeted with either 1080 or Pindone depending on the site conditions, presence of native animals and proximity to housing and waterways.
- **Trapping** – using cage traps and soft jaw foot hold traps in strategic locations to physically trap and remove the pest from a specific location. This is usually followed by humanely euthanising the pest prior to disposal.
- **Virus Release** – Recent development of the RHDV1-K5 virus has provided a new tool for rabbit management. It is important for viral release to be undertaken in conjunction with other control methods to reduce the potential for immunity to develop and spread.
- **Shooting Program** – Shooting programs are undertaken by licenced and trained professional to ensure safe program implementation and animal welfare.

Vertebrate Pest Management Qualifications

Natural Area employ a team with Cert III qualifications in Vertebrate Pest Management. This qualification is complemented with corporate and individual firearm licences and training in RHDV1-K5 release. The vertebrate pest management team have over 15 years combined experience in the field, working in WA and throughout the South West.



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