

Kangaroo Island declared feral pig free



A landmark conservation success
protecting primary industries,
biodiversity and the island's future.



Government
of South Australia



Overview

Kangaroo Island (KI) has been declared free from feral pigs following the successful eradication program, highlighting the Australian and South Australian governments' commitment to protecting the island's agriculture and pristine wilderness.

Feral pigs have been eradicated from several islands worldwide, but KI is the largest island anywhere in the world from which an established population of feral pigs has been eradicated, making this a nationally and globally significant achievement.

The Kangaroo Island Feral Pig Eradication Program is now being recognised as a flagship example of best-practice invasive species management. The skills, technology and lessons learned are now informing pest eradication efforts across South Australia and beyond.

“ *The eradication of pigs from KI is regarded as one of the only silver linings from the Black Summer bushfires* ”



Program background

For many years, Kangaroo Island has been heavily impacted by feral pigs, with the pest estimated to cost the island more than \$1 million annually in economic impacts alone. Feral pig numbers on the island were estimated at 5,000-10,000 prior to 2020.

The 2019/20 bushfires killed about 90 per cent of the feral pig population on KI and provided a unique opportunity to eradicate them. Launched in 2020 in the wake of the Black Summer bushfires, the KI Feral Pig Eradication Program removed 878 feral pigs, with the last three pigs (females) removed in March 2024.

Scale of achievement

- 878 feral pigs removed
- Largest island globally to eradicate an established feral pig population
- Nationally and internationally significant outcome





How the eradication was delivered

The eradication program used a combination of thermal-assisted aerial culling (over 2000 hours of aerial surveillance and control using military-grade thermal cameras), detector dogs, ground shooting, ground baiting and trapping.

How the eradication was confirmed

In July 2024, the program entered a two-year “proof of freedom” phase, which included a network of more than 350 cameras taking images over two years assisted by artificial intelligence and more than six tonnes of bait to attract pigs. During this time, no detections or signs of feral pigs were recorded, providing a high degree of confidence that pigs are no longer present on the island.

- Forensic analysis showed there was no feral pig DNA in creeks, rivers and waterways (30 locations with more than 362 samples taken)
- Almost 1.5 million images were captured showing native wildlife and livestock thriving in the absence of feral pigs
- Determined and vigilant surveillance and reporting from the Kangaroo Island farmers and community
- Daily ground surveys by three Biosecurity Officers searching creeks and previous feral pig hot spots for signs (1400 kms walked since July 2024)



Why it matters - impacts of feral pigs and why eradication was critical

Feral pigs are a significant agricultural and environmental pest. They prey on newborn lambs, damage crops and compete with livestock for pasture. They trash, trample and pollute natural habitats, spread weeds, damage infrastructure and carry parasites and diseases that pose serious threats to livestock, wildlife and people.

Feral pig populations can increase rapidly. A single breeding pair can expand to around 100 pigs within two years

“ A single breeding pair can expand to around 100 pigs within two years. ”

Partnerships and collaboration

Backed by \$7.5 million in funding from the Australian and South Australian governments and the South Australian livestock industry, the program was delivered in partnership with the KI Landscape Board, Flinders University, National Feral Pig Action Plan, National Parks and Wildlife Service, AgKI, Livestock SA, KI farmers, landholders and KI Land for Wildlife.

The project shows what can be achieved when governments, industry and the community seize an opportunity in the wake of disaster and work together towards a common goal.

Outcomes and benefits

- Long-term agricultural protection
- Thriving native wildlife
- Improved biodiversity and ecosystem health
- Reduced biosecurity risk
- Economic benefits for KI community
- Protection of pristine landscapes

"I want to thank and congratulate everyone who contributed to this milestone over the past six years. It has taken a huge effort on the ground from teams across the Department of Primary Industries and Regions, Department of Environment and Water, the KI Landscape Board, local landholders and many other partners and stakeholders.

We also want to thank the Kangaroo Island community for their strong support throughout the project. Without them, this achievement would not have been possible."

Minister Clare Scriven

Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development

Minister for Forest Industries

