

Western Tracks

Your questions answered

The Western Tracks collaring project is a collaborative research project that aims to improve the management of wild dogs and feral pigs in flood and associated country of the Paroo, Cuttaburra, Warrego and Darling River systems. The project is measuring the effectiveness of control efforts by using GPS collars to monitor wild dogs and feral pigs.

How did this project come about?

Landholders were interested in improving wild dog and feral pig management by developing a better understanding of the pest animal movements in Western NSW.

They contacted NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and sought advice from the NSW DPI Vertebrate Pest Research Unit, who have considerable experience and success in using GPS collars to track pest animals in similar research projects across the state.

Extensive consultation with landholders and other stakeholders in western NSW led Western Local Land Services to seek funding and start the Western Tracks project.

In mid-2019, landholders and other stakeholders voted to endorse the project at pest animal forums in Broken Hill and Tilpa. The NSW Farmers' Association Western NSW Wild Dog Coordinator, Bruce Duncan has also undertaken extensive one-on-one consultation with many stakeholder groups and individuals over the last two years of planning.

What is this project setting out to achieve?

The primary motivation for the project is to make wild dog and feral pig control more cost effective and efficient for people in the Western Division.

Data gathered will give landholders information about:

- the movements and interactions of feral pigs and wild dogs in the landscape — home range analysis, activity and habitat use/preference
- how feral pigs and wild dogs use the landscape at different times of the year
- how effective routine control programs are.

How will this data be gathered?

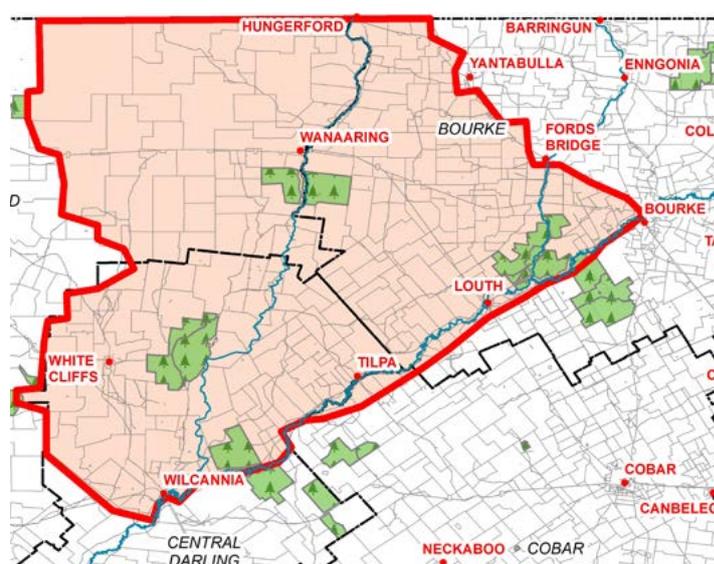
Wild dogs and feral pigs will be trapped, fitted with a GPS tracking collar and released where they are trapped.

The movements of the collared animals will be monitored for up to a year after release while routine control activities are carried out within the region.

At the end of the year, the collars are programmed to fall off and will be collected to retrieve the data. Toward the end of the 12 months, prior to the collars falling off, the project team will work with landholders to locate collared wild dogs and destroy them.

Where will wild dogs and feral pigs be trapped, collared and released?

The project covers approximately 6 million hectares and 330 properties in the Western Local Land Services region.



Western Tracks collaring project

Have landholders given permission for wild dogs and feral pigs to be trapped on their property?

Yes. All landholders participating in the project have signed a property access agreement form which outlined the project and the circumstances in which the project team would be on their property.

What happens if a collared wild dog causes damage to livestock?

The project team understand landholders are accepting potential short-term losses while the study is being undertaken. If predation events occur landholders are within their rights, and are encouraged, to conduct any wild dog control efforts they deem necessary.

If alerted to a predation issue, Western Local Land Services can provide recent location information for collared wild dog/s on the affected properties to assist landholders to control the dog/s and return the collar/s.

Are landholders encouraged to control a wild dog or feral pig if they notice it has a collar?

Yes. Landholders are encouraged to continue to perform routine pest animal management as per normal and contact Western Local Land Services if collars are retrieved or found.

Western Local Land Services is continuing to undertake its usual programs and projects for the control of wild dogs and feral pigs, such as its seasonal wild dog baiting control programs and Professional Wild Dog Controller program.

How can landholders get involved in this project and potentially have pest animals trapped on their property?

Landholders can :

- complete a property access agreement form
- inform Western Local Land Services of sightings, tracks and sign of wild dogs and feral pigs
- record all sightings and related information in FeralScan.
- provide ear tip samples from culled wild dogs for DNA analysis (vials and sample collection instructions are available from the project team)

We recommended landholders in the project area complete a property access agreement form to allow the quick recovery of collars, even if pest animals are not being collared on their property.



Is this the first collaring project to be undertaken in Western NSW?

Yes. In other parts of NSW, the NSW Government has been using GPS collars to track wild dogs since 1989 and the data generated has helped deliver proven long-term wild dog management benefits across the state.

Who is involved in this project?

Private and public landholders, pest management and Landcare groups, Western Local Land Services, NSW Department of Primary Industries, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Southern Queensland Landscapes and the NSW Farmers Association are working collaboratively to deliver this project.

How is the project funded?

Funding for this project is through the Australian Government's Communities Combatting Pest Animals & Weeds During Drought program, and the NSW Department of Primary Industries Invasive Species Research program.

Where can I find out further information?

Contact your nearest Western Local Land Services biosecurity officer on the details provided.