NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Feral animal management strategy

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Acknowledgement of Country

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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Executive summary

Feral animals pose one of the greatest threats to Australia's biodiversity. In NSW, over 350 native species, populations and ecological communities face threats from feral animal predation and activity (NSW BioNet Threatened Species Profile Dataset 2024). With NSW national parks providing access to nature and contributing to tourism and economies, feral animals can also pose significant economic and wellbeing risks. In this strategy, feral animals include all invasive introduced pest animals and may include native animals that harm national park values.

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is responsible for managing feral animals in national parks. Management focuses on safeguarding assets such as native animal and plant populations, threatened species and ecological communities, and natural and cultural heritage, and maintaining biosecurity obligations in collaboration with neighbouring landholders. Results are maximised through a strategic risk-based approach, with an emphasis on protecting national park values.

This feral animal management strategy (the strategy, summarised under 'Strategy summary') outlines the long-term objectives and actions designed to maintain conservation and biosecurity. The strategy covers a 10-year period and is reviewed as required. It is aligned with NPWS legislative responsibilities and other NSW Government strategies, such as the *NSW Invasive Species Plan 2023–2028* and regional strategic pest animal management plans.

The strategy is supported by implementation plans, standard operating procedures, protocols, governance frameworks, evaluation plans and various resources. A feral animal control plan sets feral animal control programs to achieve priorities such as those in the NPWS Threatened Species Framework. Feral animal control programs are dynamic and reviewed annually or earlier if required. The control plan is used to guide the allocation of resources during operational and budget planning.

NPWS maintains monitoring and data management tools to support feral animal management, demonstrate control achievements and adaptively manage control programs. Feral animal monitoring protocols enable standardised monitoring and data collection and analysis, which inform investment and decision-making and facilitate adaptive management. Innovative best-practice management tools and research are provided through collaborative partnerships to support feral animal control.

Implementation of the strategic management approaches and actions outlined in this strategy will allow NPWS to fulfil its biosecurity obligations and control feral animals to protect the natural and cultural heritage of NSW national parks.

Strategy summary

Vision: NSW national parks and their values are protected from the impacts of feral animals

Outcome: Park values are conserved, and the impacts of feral animals are minimised through strategic feral animal management

Objectives and actions of the feral animal management strategy

Objectives	1. Deliver threatened species, biodiversity and biosecurity priorities	2. Maximise benefits to biodiversity, natural and cultural heritage and the community	3. Demonstrate feral animal control outcomes and improve programs	4. Improve feral animal control impact and efficiency	5. Enhance knowledge, skills, resources and partnerships
Actions	Implement strategic feral animal management 1.1 Develop and maintain a feral animal control plan that identifies and prioritises NPWS control programs to: • deliver NPWS statutory obligations • achieve objectives in NSW Government biodiversity and biosecurity plans and strategies, including the NPWS Threatened Species Framework 1.2 Implement control programs as prioritised in the NPWS feral animal control plan	Increase adoption of best-practice biosecurity measures 2.1 Assess feral animal population distribution, abundance, and asset-based risk to inform prioritisation 2.2 Provide tools to ensure efficient and effective feral animal control 2.3 Implement risk-based prioritisation of NPWS feral animal management programs 2.4 Adjust the scale of control programs to best achieve outcomes and enact adaptive management	Monitor, evaluate, report and adapt programs 3.1 Implement robust outcome-focused feral animal control programs with consistent metrics to quantify control effectiveness 3.2 Increase quality and comprehensiveness of data to effectively demonstrate feral animal control effort and outcomes 3.3 Increase feral animal population monitoring to inform control programs and maximise benefits	Support feral animal research and innovation 4.1 Facilitate research and innovation to improve best-practice feral animal management and monitoring techniques 4.2 Identify and address gaps in density-related knowledge to inform reduction targets for feral animal control 4.3 Develop and apply post-disturbance feral animal control decision support tools 4.4 Integrate feral animal risk mitigation into NPWS fire management activities 4.5 Support and facilitate research on feral cat control options 4.6 Apply research outcomes to NPWS feral animal control programs	Coordinate knowledge sharing, communication and collaboration 5.1 Build knowledge and capability for best-practice feral animal control 5.2 Participate in knowledge sharing across government, industry and community 5.3 Develop and maintain partnerships to leverage benefit from outcomes 5.4 Participate in strategic cross-tenure programs 5.5 Collaborate with government, industry and community partners to achieve shared biosecurity and biodiversity outcomes

Contents

List of tables

List of figures

Glossary

Term	Definition
Asset-led program (asset protection)	A management program dedicated to control of feral animals designed to protect a biological (living), natural, cultural or infrastructure asset.
Containment program	A feral animal-led program designed to restrict a target feral animal to within a specified containment area and to prevent its spread outside of this area.
Eradication program	A program designed to remove a target feral animal completely from a specified area, using surveillance to determine that no further presence is detected.
Feral animal	Any invasive introduced pest animal, or a native animal that may hinder reserve management objectives, including biodiversity values.
Feral animal-led program	A program in which the objective is driven solely by a feral animal threat, with a focus on managing the animal. Contrast this with an asset-led program, with a focus on recovery of the asset. Typical examples are categorised as C-PEC or H-II (Table 7, Appendix 1).
Feral animal control plan	A feral animal control plan directs how feral animals are to be managed to achieve the objectives of this feral animal management strategy. For a control plan, each operational branch maintains a table of feral animal control programs categorised by prioritisation criteria (see Appendix 1).
Management objective	The overarching objective of a program that drives all management activities. Management objectives for feral animal control programs can be defined as either feral animal-led (see Prevention, Eradication, and Containment) or asset-led (see Asset protection).
Prevention program	A program designed to prevent the establishment of a feral animal in a specified area, particularly animals known to be present nearby. Management typically involves pre-emptive surveillance around high-risk areas, shifting to eradication if an incursion is found.
Program	An invasive species program is a structured set of activities, unified by a single management objective (i.e. prevention, eradication, containment, or asset protection), a target invasive species, a geographic area to which the objective applies (spatial extent), and measurable aims that allow for monitoring, resource allocation and prioritisation.
Pest and Weed Information System (PWIS)	The Pest and Weed Information System (PWIS) is NPWS's platform for capturing, storing and reporting on effort, costs and outputs from the organisation's investment in feral animal and weed management programs. Its functions comprise data acquisition, administration and expenditure, and a geodatabase holding extensive spatial datasets related to the planning and implementation of programs.

NPWS takes a strategic, risk-based approach

National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) aims to deliver sustainable feral animal control through a strategic, risk-based approach that ensures that its actions and programs remain efficient, cohesive and focused on contemporary priorities. This strategy provides the framework to achieve best-practice feral animal control and outlines long-term objectives and actions that will achieve conservation and biosecurity (Figure 1). It is supported by implementation plans, standard operating procedures, protocols and other resources.

The prioritisation framework detailed in this strategy delivers a feral animal control plan to guide the allocation of resources during annual operational and budget planning. Monitoring and data management frameworks and tools support outcome-driven feral animal management and allow NPWS to demonstrate control achievements and adaptively manage programs. Research priorities are delivered through collaborative partnerships, and innovative best-practice management tools are applied operationally to enhance management impact and effectiveness.

Prioritising and implementing feral animal control

Assessing risk and legislative responsibilities

Priorities for feral animal control are assessed using a 3-stage approach (Figure 2). Risk and legislative responsibilities are first assessed to determine appropriate action and inform the development of feral animal control programs. NPWS may undertake and incorporate feral animal risk assessments into management actions to assess the level of risk (accounting for how their distribution, density and impacts vary spatially), assess feasibility of control, identify effective actions and guide resource allocation. Programs are then developed to focus on either limiting the distribution of the feral animal or reducing the impact on assets. Feral animal control data are collected, analysed and evaluated for reporting and adaptive management.

Feral animal-led versus asset-led approaches

Feral animal control objectives are developed in consideration of the impact and threats posed to assets, as well as the spatial distribution of feral animals over time. Consequently, feral animal control programs are driven by 4 management objectives: prevention, eradication, containment and asset-based protection (Figure 3).

New feral animal incursions require a rapid response to prevent establishment and spread. Feral animal-led objectives of prevention, eradication, and containment focus on the feral species and aim to halt their establishment or spread, thereby averting future harm.

Where eradication or containment is not viable, NPWS undertakes asset-led feral animal control (Figure 3). Management of asset-led control programs aims to:

- monitor feral animal populations and impacts to inform reduction targets and results
- plan control programs at the appropriate scale for assets and feral animal populations
- reduce feral animal activity or population density to levels where impacts on key assets are negligible
- monitor to determine effective feral animal reduction and outcomes
- continue feral animal control activities and fill knowledge gaps when data to support the above activities are unavailable.

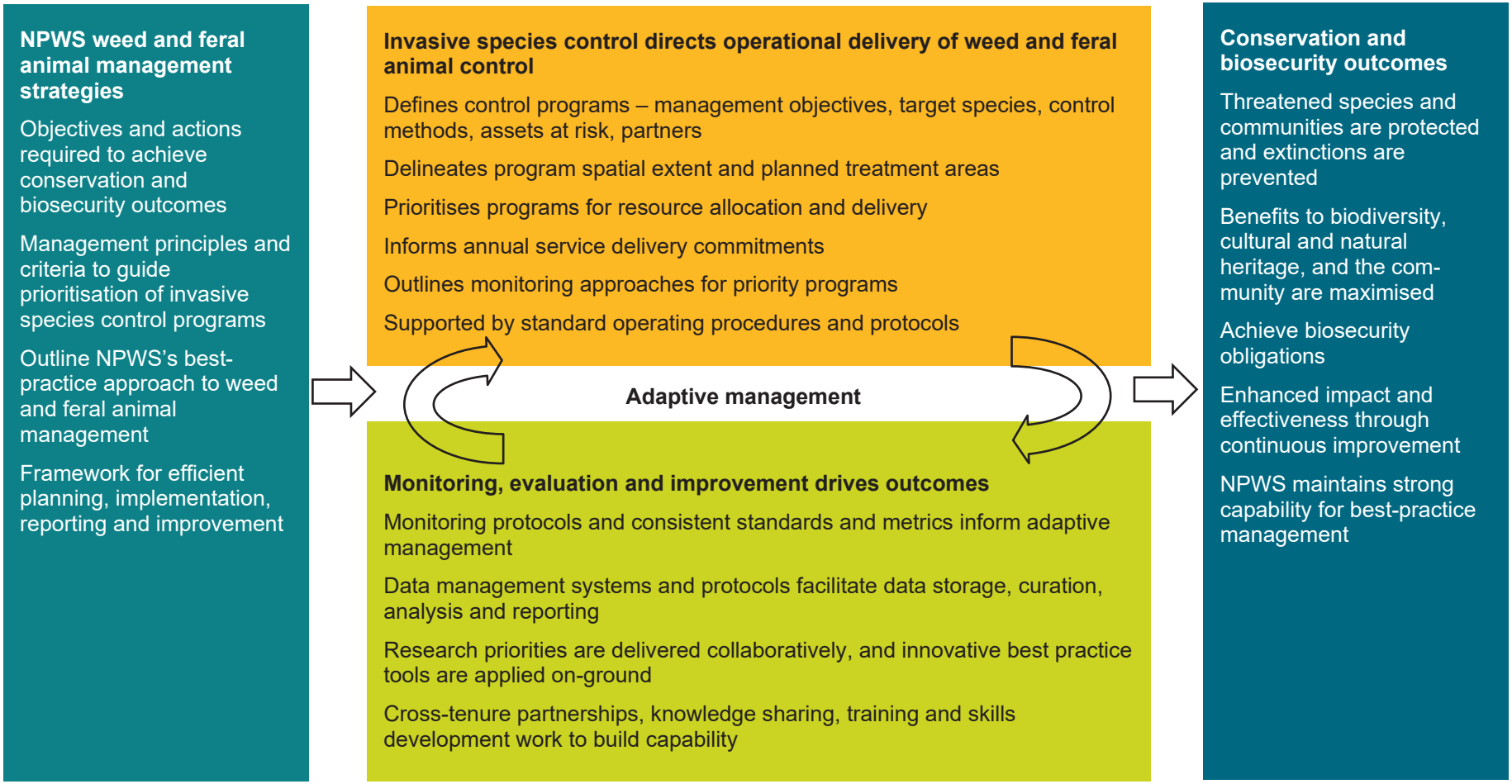

Figure 1 NPWS feral animal management strategies guide operational delivery to achieve outcomes

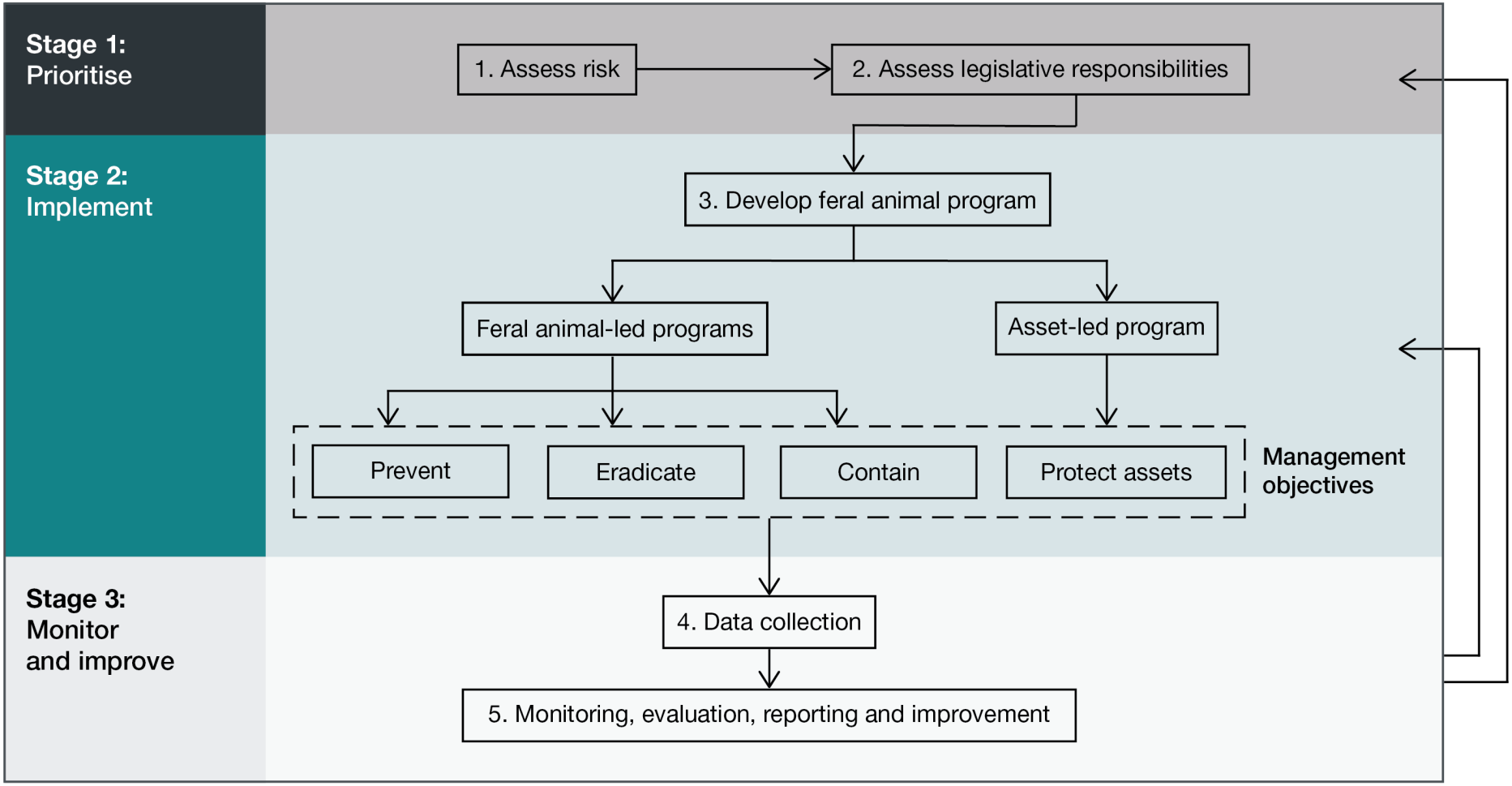

Figure 2 NPWS strategic approach to feral animal management

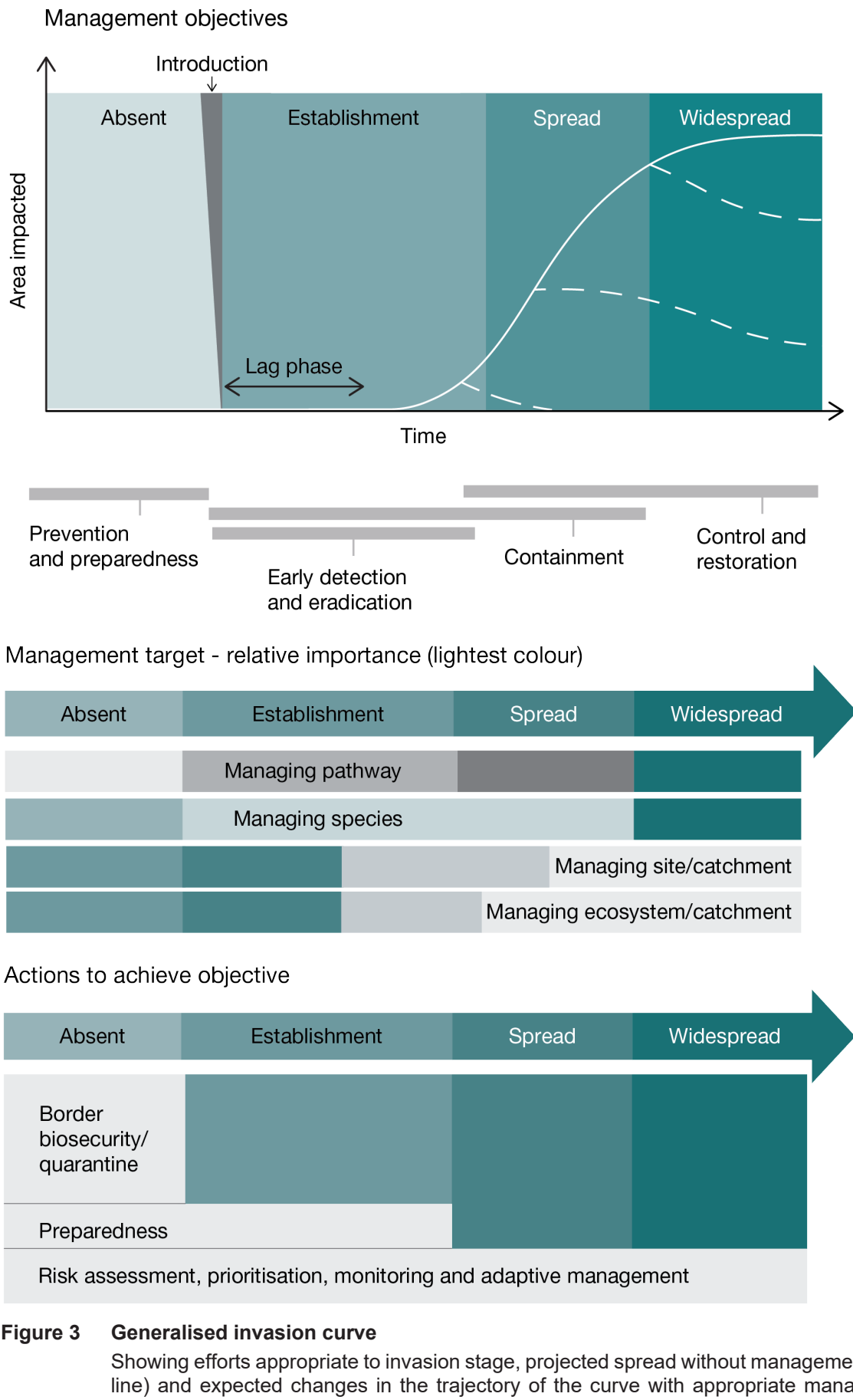

Figure 3 **Generalised invasion curve**

Showing efforts appropriate to invasion stage, projected spread without management (solid line) and expected changes in the trajectory of the curve with appropriate management actions (dashed line). Source: based on IPBES (2023)

Prioritisation framework

The prioritisation framework (Appendix 1) guides the development of feral animal control plan. Table 1 identifies categories and their objectives to prioritise control programs.

A feral animal control plan assigns a priority to each program on the basis of realised or potential impacts, assets at risk and statutory obligations. The prioritisation framework ensures alignment with legislative, NPWS, local, regional and state priorities and the application of appropriate risk-based, outcome-driven management objectives (Appendix 1). Priority programs are considered for annual resource planning.

Table 1 Categories and objectives to prioritise NPWS feral animal control programs*

Category	Category objective
Critical – Threatened Species Conservation	Feral animal control to protect threatened entities listed under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* and delivered through actions outlined in the NPWS Threatened Species Framework
Critical – Prevention, Eradication or Containment	Feral animal control to prevent, eradicate or contain feral animals (at state or regional scales) to deliver biosecurity priorities under NSW Government legislation, policies or plans
Critical – Economic, Health or Disease	Feral animal control to prevent or reduce impacts on economic enterprises or human health, or as part of a declared emergency response
Critical – Major Disturbance	Feral animal control to abate an increased risk or to capitalise on improved management opportunities after a major disturbance
High – Heritage and Wilderness	Feral animal control to reduce impacts on Aboriginal cultural values, significant state, national or international historic heritage values, or national or international natural values, including declared wilderness
High – Threatened Species Conservation	Feral animal control to protect threatened species, populations or communities, additional to actions under the NPWS Threatened Species Framework
High – Isolated Infestations	Feral animal control to remove an isolated infestation of a high-risk feral animals that may be widely distributed in other parts of the region, but has high potential for significant future impacts on park values
Medium – Recreation Aesthetic	Feral animal control to manage impacts on recreational or aesthetic values
Medium – Biodiversity Conservation	Feral animal control to reduce impacts on biodiversity values, or to address Key Threatening Processes as listed in the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*
Medium – Stakeholder Priorities	Feral animal control to reduce impacts on NPWS values identified as a stakeholder priority
Low – Localised Priorities	Control of feral animals that have low or highly localised impacts

*See Appendix 1 for NPWS feral animal control prioritisation framework, including criteria for assigning program categories.

Feral animal control plan guides operational delivery

A feral animal control plan facilitates the implementation of the strategy's objectives by identifying and prioritising control programs across NPWS lands. A plan prioritises actions to:

- meet NPWS conservation and biosecurity obligations
- deliver priority feral animal control to safeguard high-risk assets
- align feral animal control with NPWS conservation programs and improve control effectiveness
- guide feral animal research to support NPWS programs
- incorporate innovative control and monitoring tools.

NPWS designs control programs with the aim of minimising the impacts of feral animals on the natural environment (including threatened species and ecosystems), cultural and heritage assets, visitor safety and park neighbours. Individual programs are developed to achieve desired management objectives that address feral animal threats. Programs are adaptable and are reviewed and updated as required through an annual review and evaluation process.

A control program consists of a structured set of activities unified by:

- a single management objective (prevention, eradication, containment or asset protection) and program aims
- target feral animal species (and, for asset-led programs, the assets at risk)
- control methods
- a geographic area to which the management objective applies (spatial extent)
- measurable aims that allow for monitoring, resource allocation and prioritisation.

It also references any internal or external partners, monitoring approaches (where possible) and costs. Programs aim at mitigating key threats and achieve conservation and biosecurity goals by:

- detecting, monitoring (where feasible) and mapping feral species presence, density, abundance or damage before initiating control operations
- prioritising control to conserve critical populations or assets threatened by feral animals
- establishing density reduction targets or other impact-driven targets to mitigate damage and achieve conservation outcomes
- implementing control measures on feral animal populations to meet program objectives
- monitoring control programs to gauge success and guide adjustments
- adapting programs to enhance control and maintain achievements
- providing essential tools, research, skills and partnerships through collaboration and leadership to support best-practice feral animal management.

NPWS participates in cooperative, strategic cross-tenure feral animal control programs when the asset or target feral animal population crosses administrative or tenure boundaries. Coordination of effort with other land managers ensures the most effective programs to meet shared objectives.

Monitoring, evaluation and improvement drives outcomes

NPWS aims to continuously enhance its feral animal control programs by integrating new tools, knowledge and research into policies and procedures in collaboration with key stakeholders. Monitoring guides reduction targets and provides for adaptive management, with the goal of reducing populations to levels posing negligible or acceptable impacts on assets.

NPWS is establishing monitoring programs, identifying priority sites and building capacity to enable control efforts to be informed by knowledge of feral animal populations, including knowledge of the relationship between population density and impacts. Data may be obtained through targeted monitoring and other NPWS programs.

Data relating to feral animal control programs are captured in the Pest and Weed Information System (PWIS). This centralised system facilitates reporting on feral animal control activities and allows data and spatial analysis to be incorporated into planning. Wherever feasible, monitoring is integrated into control programs to:

- track feral animal density and impacts in order to set and update removal targets
- determine whether feral animal density is being reduced
- determine whether the spatial scale of programs is sufficient to avoid rapid recolonisation
- assess the effectiveness of control using indicators (e.g. asset metrics) in circumstances where density monitoring is unattainable
- enable a rapid alert and response system to identify feral animals entering priority sites during vulnerable stages of an asset's life cycle.

Asset monitoring helps determine the effectiveness of control programs to achieve conservation outcomes. Asset monitoring data can be obtained through NPWS threatened species programs and ecological health monitoring. For programs driven by biosecurity objectives, NPWS obtains asset data from local land services and private landholders and provides support to the Department of Primary Industry and Regional Development.

Spatial planning of feral animal control programs, with consideration of animal distribution, location of assets and the affected area, seeks to maximise benefits and reduce feral animal population recovery rates over a broad area.

Application of monitoring results to program evaluation will improve understanding of feral animal density–impact relationships and help guide decision-making around investment and outcomes. Where effort is sustained and target animal numbers are reduced, target densities will help guide efforts to sustain conservation and biosecurity. Incorporating density targets, where feasible, along with asset monitoring ensures informed and effective investment in feral animal control.

Delivering the NPWS feral animal management strategy

This strategy (summarised under 'Strategy summary') presents the long-term objectives and actions designed to achieve desired conservation and biosecurity outcomes. Tables 2 to 6 provides further detail on National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) actions to meet objectives.

Objective 1. Deliver threatened species, biodiversity and biosecurity priorities

Table 2 Actions to implement strategic feral animal management

Action	Description
1.1 Develop and maintain a feral animal control plan that identifies and prioritises NPWS control programs to: • deliver NPWS statutory obligations • achieve objectives in NSW Government biodiversity and biosecurity plans and strategies, including the NPWS Threatened Species Framework	Feral animal control programs are prioritised to deliver NPWS statutory obligations and NSW Government biodiversity and biosecurity strategies and plans, including the NPWS Threatened Species Framework and regional strategic pest animal management plans. The prioritisation framework ensures alignment with legislative, NPWS, local, regional, and state priorities, and the application of appropriate risk-based, outcome-driven management objectives. The NPWS Threatened Species Framework outlines a series of actions to meet our commitment of zero extinctions on NPWS land. These include the delivery of the largest feral animal control program in national park history and implementing Conservation Action Plans for Assets of Intergenerational Significance, publishing Ecological Health Performance Scorecards, and delivering Saving our Species actions. The *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* lists 19 'feral animal' KTPs. The Act includes the objective to 'minimise the impacts of KTPs on biodiversity and ecological integrity'. To manage these threats, NPWS identifies and supports critical strategic research to improve the prevention, eradication, containment, and management of these threats across NPWS lands.
1.2 Implement control programs as prioritised in the NPWS feral animal control plan	A feral animal control plan guides operational delivery of control programs. Feral animal control programs are dynamic and reviewed annually or earlier if required. The control plan is used to inform the allocation of resources during operational and budget planning.

KTP = key threatening process.

Objective 2. Maximise benefits to biodiversity, natural and cultural heritage and the community

Table 3 Actions to increase adoption of best-practice feral animal control

Action	Description
2.1 Assess feral animal population distribution, abundance and asset-based risk to inform prioritisation	Feral animal population dynamics and impacts vary across the landscape. Although monitoring varies by region and habitat, maintaining consistency where possible enables long-term assessment of population dynamics and statewide comparison. Knowledge of target species' distribution, abundance, habitat preference, risk to or degree of damage to assets, and the costs of reducing populations to mitigate damage allows NPWS to: • remove feral animals at a rate that exceeds their maximum population growth rate so as to reduce their population • achieve management outcomes and protect assets.
2.2 Provide tools to ensure efficient and effective feral animal control	NPWS develops and maintains policies and standard operating procedures to support safe, effective, humane and compliant best-practice feral animal control, including the use of firearms and pesticides. Capability and capacity for implementing these tools is maintained through formal training and development activities and succession planning.
2.3 Implement risk-based prioritisation of NPWS feral animal management programs	This strategy guides development of a feral animal control plan, which inform NPWS annual delivery planning and resource allocation for feral animal control. A feral animal control plan is designed to ensure that control activities align with NPWS legislative responsibilities and priorities, including the NPWS Threatened Species Framework and biosecurity obligations. Monitoring is prioritised for key programs to inform decision-making and to assess progress towards outcomes.
2.4 Adjust the scale of control programs to best achieve outcomes and enact adaptive management	The scale of control programs may be increased across entire landscapes that have suitable habitat to support multiple assets. This approach may reduce rapid recolonisation by feral animals in core areas following control, to manage feral animal populations up to natural barriers of movement, or in response to climatic influences.

Objective 3. Demonstrate feral animal control outcomes and improve programs

Table 4 Actions to monitor, evaluate, report, and adapt programs

Action	Description
3.1 Implement robust outcome-focused feral animal control programs with consistent metrics to quantify control effectiveness	Where feasible, feral animal control reduction targets will be informed by population monitoring, underpinned by a greater understanding of density–impact relationships. Data collection methods and reporting metrics will be standardised in monitoring protocols to produce data that allow for evaluation of control progress against outcomes. Metrics for assessing control success or progress can be grouped into 3 classes: • control activity (outputs), e.g. number of animals removed, number of baits laid • program outcomes (for selected programs), e.g. proportion of population removed, number of programs meeting density reduction targets, number meeting removal targets • asset protection outcomes – for threatened species, biodiversity, and biosecurity, e.g., asset population is increasing, improved condition, increased recruitment, increased activity on camera, decreased losses (particularly relevant for livestock). Associated benefits of effective feral animal control include reduced herbivory and competition with native fauna, reduced likelihood of disease spread, increased carbon sequestration via recovered vegetative communities, reduced stress on fauna through fewer predation encounters, and ecological and financial benefits of reduced damage to sensitive areas and waterways. These outcomes may be assessed through other NPWS programs (e.g. EcoHealth report cards; annual threatened species reporting on trajectories).
3.2 Increase quality and comprehensiveness of data to effectively demonstrate feral animal control effort and outcomes	Priority actions to improve data quality and comprehensiveness: • determining appropriate data requirements for each control program identified in control priority plans • assessing and removing barriers to data collection and reporting on control operations • improving feral animal control data collection, including spatial data, through the development of data collection standards that facilitate the consistent capture and reporting of all control activity and effort • developing feral animal monitoring protocols to guide the collection, processing, storage, analysis and presentation of monitoring data • where feasible, aligning asset and threat monitoring to inform feral animal control.
3.3 Increase feral animal population monitoring to inform control programs and maximise benefits	Monitoring feral animal populations before and after control ensures that minimum reduction targets are met. Post-control monitoring also feeds back into the control program, informing long-term effort and budget requirements to maintain target population reductions.

Objective 4. Improve feral animal control impact and efficiency

Table 5 Actions to support research and innovation and to apply new technology and tools

Action	Description
4.1 Facilitate research and innovation to improve best-practice feral animal management and monitoring techniques	NPWS identifies and facilitates priority research to support best-practice feral animal management based on up-to-date information and technology. NPWS aims to: • create and maintain a publicly accessible database of current research projects and priorities • promote collaborative research through a public webpage listing potential collaborative opportunities • incorporate updated and new technologies and tools into feral animal control programs.
4.2 Identify and address gaps in density-related knowledge to inform reduction targets for feral animal control	Where feasible, effective feral animal control is underpinned by a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between population density and impacts on assets. This knowledge is used to set targets and remove the minimum required animals to benefit assets. Knowledge of population density and density–impact relationships of many feral animals is limited, and NPWS is committed to addressing this challenge by: • assessing current knowledge and identifying research gaps relating to species density, including by vegetation type and density–impact relationships • prioritising investigation into identified research gaps in collaboration with feral animal control programs.
4.3 Develop and apply post-disturbance feral animal control decision support tools	Major disturbances, including bushfire, flood and drought, can present risks and opportunities in feral animal management. NPWS works with stakeholders to develop and use post-disturbance decision support tools to mitigate risks and maximise opportunities. The Major Disturbance category of the control prioritisation framework supports and facilitates appropriate control responses following extreme events.
4.4 Integrate feral animal risk mitigation into NPWS fire management activities	NPWS staff maintain and share knowledge of the biology and ecology of priority feral animals to ensure that control can be incorporated into hazard reduction planning. Feral animal risk mitigation is implemented in NPWS fire management planning to facilitate better protection of high-value areas following fires. Additional opportunities to integrate feral animal control with fire management activities are pursued.
4.5 Support and facilitate research on feral cat control options	Feral cats present a particular challenge for control and have significant impacts on conservation assets. NPWS supports and encourages research into improved feral cat control, including gene editing and gene drive technologies.
4.6 Apply research outcomes to NPWS feral animal control programs	NPWS encourages and supports applied research into feral animal management with research outcomes integrated into management programs. It partners with research organisations on priority programs and supports collaborative research to develop and refine new techniques and technologies for more efficient and effective management and monitoring of feral animal impacts on NPWS lands.

Objective 5. Enhance knowledge, skills, resources and partnerships

Table 6 Actions to coordinate knowledge sharing, communication and collaboration

Action	Description
5.1 Build knowledge and capability for best-practice feral animal control	NPWS aims to continually improve knowledge and capabilities for best-practice feral animal management through: • publication of tools and knowledge • development of standard operating procedures and guidance • facilitating learning and accessibility to tools to better support staff controlling feral animals across the State • building capacity for NPWS staff through succession planning, control implementation and program delivery and reporting across the State • providing live online training in control techniques to increase capabilities and consistency.
5.2 Participate in knowledge sharing across government, industry and community	Sharing knowledge improves capabilities for early detection and rapid response to new feral animal incursions and improves best-practice management. NPWS shares information on its feral animal management priorities and actions with government, industry and community groups. This includes local engagement with park visitors via media tools and events.
5.3 Develop and maintain partnerships to benefit from outcomes	NPWS can better achieve its vision of protecting NSW national parks by working with partners to benefit from outcomes. Partnerships are built on shared goals and complementary skillsets. Examples include: • partnerships with research institutions to deliver priority research to develop feral animal management tools or address feral animal management challenges • partnerships to increase capacity for feral animal management and biodiversity protection • partnerships with government, not-for-profit organisations, industry and community.
5.4 Participate in strategic cross-tenure programs	Cross-tenure programs and collaborations allow landscape-scale management and joint delivery of shared objectives.
5.5 Collaborate with government, industry and community partners to achieve shared biosecurity and biodiversity outcomes	NPWS maintains cross-tenure relationships through local, regional, state and national governance bodies and participation in priority, cross-tenure feral animal management programs.

References

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More information

Zero extinctions – threatened species framework, Environment and Heritage website.

Appendix

Appendix 1. NPWS feral animal control prioritisation framework

Feral animal control programs are designed to achieve desired management objectives (prevention, eradication, containment or asset-based protection). Each program is categorised against criteria (Table 7) that allows prioritisation and allocation of resources. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) feral animal control plan comprises a table of all feral animal programs across NPWS lands. Priority programs are considered for resourcing through annual service delivery planning.

Table 7 Framework to prioritise feral animal control programs, including priority category, objective and criteria for assigning categories

Priority category	Objective	Criteria
Critical – Threatened Species Conservation (C-TSC)	Feral animal control to protect threatened entities listed under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* and delivered through actions outlined in the NPWS Threatened Species Framework	Both of the following: • Feral animals identified in a NSW government-endorsed prioritisation process as a threat to the threatened entity. • NPWS has an agency-level commitment under an existing strategy or is legislatively responsible for managing the threats, including the feral animal, to protect the threatened entity (e.g. prevent extinctions; stabilise or improve the trajectory of threatened species). This includes: 1. legislative responsibilities to control feral animals as part of a Conservation Action Plan for an Asset of Intergenerational Significance 2. implementing strategic feral animal control programs to deliver the NPWS Threatened Species Framework 3. implementing strategic feral animal control programs to deliver priority Saving our Species programs on NPWS lands 4. implementing strategic feral animal control programs to minimise feral animal impacts on Areas of Outstanding Biodiversity Value.
Critical – Prevention, Eradication or Containment (C-PEC)	Feral animal control to prevent, eradicate or contain feral animals at the state or regional scale	One or more of the following: • Feral animal control to deliver management priorities under NSW Government legislation, including feral animals listed as Prohibited Matter, Control Orders or Biosecurity Zones under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*.

Priority category	Objective	Criteria
		• Feral animal control to deliver 'Prevention, Eradication or Containment' (i.e. Exclusion Zone) priorities in Local Land Services' Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plans. • Feral animal control for the prevention and preparation for outbreaks of pests and diseases under the *Federal Biosecurity Act 2015* and *Biosecurity Regulations 2016.*
Critical – Economic, Health or Disease (C-EHD)	Feral animal control to prevent or reduce impact on economic enterprises or human health; or as part of a declared emergency response	One or more of the following: • Feral animal control where there is evidence that the animals are severely reducing the productivity of neighbouring economic enterprises, e.g. wild dog control where there is significant stock loss. • Control of feral animals that present harm to humans, wildlife or livestock. • Control of feral animals that are a vector for diseases that frequently cause severe illness or death in people, wildlife or livestock, e.g. control of feral pigs in an urban interface area to prevent an outbreak of foot and mouth disease. • Feral animal control as part of a declared state or national emergency response. • Control of feral animals to contribute substantially to the NSW Government's priority carbon or nature-positive programs.
Critical – Major Disturbance (C-MD)	Feral animal control to abate an increased risk or to capitalise on improved management opportunity after a major disturbance (an extreme event that occurs on a landscape scale and is extraordinary for the area or region, i.e. is not a discrete, localised disaster, irrespective of severity)	Both the following: • Control of feral animals identified as having increased invasiveness, impact or management feasibility shortly after a major disturbance event. • NPWS can capitalise on a management opportunity after a major disturbance. The program will revert to its previous category or be re-categorised when: • the critical recovery period or identified opportunity has passed and one or more of the following: • risks have been mitigated during the critical recovery period • 3 years of control has passed. • the asset status is self-sustainable or has recovered to its pre-disturbance level.
High – Heritage and Wilderness (H-HW)	Feral animal control to reduce impacts on Aboriginal cultural values, significant state, national or international historic heritage values, or national or international natural values	One or more of the following: • Control of feral animals that are having unacceptable impacts on state values, cultural heritage, national natural heritage or world heritage. • Control of feral animals that harm Ramsar, JAMBA, CAMBA or ROKAMBA sites. • Control of feral animals that harm Wild Rivers or declared Wilderness Areas. • Control of feral animals that impinge on Assets of Outstanding Universal Value.

Priority category	Objective	Criteria
High – Threatened Species Conservation (H-TSC)	Feral animal control to protect threatened species, populations or communities	All of the following: • Feral animal control where NPWS does not have an agency-level commitment for feral animal management under an existing strategy to manage feral animals to protect the threatened entity. • The threatened entity's presence at the site can be verified. • The feral animal will significantly harm the threatened entity if left unmanaged in the short term. • Other high-level threats are being actively managed.
High – Isolated Infestations (H-II)	Feral animal control to remove isolated incursions of high-risk feral animals that may be widely distributed in other parts of the region, and with high potential for future impacts on park values	• Feral animal control to eliminate incursions of populations from an isolated or localised area.
Medium – Recreation or Aesthetic (M-RA)	Feral animal control to reduce impacts on recreation or aesthetic values, e.g. rabbit control to reduce burrows, diggings, and scat around a national park visitor centre	• Control of feral animals that do not have a significant impact on biodiversity but are managed by NPWS around visitor infrastructure for recreational or aesthetic purposes.
Medium – Biodiversity Conservation (M-BC)	Feral animal control to reduce impacts on biodiversity values, or to address KTPs	• Control of feral animals that harm or will harm identified threatened entities if left unmanaged in the long term (reduced urgency for immediate control) and one or more of the following: • Feral animal control has a lower likelihood of resulting in the recovery of the threatened entity, owing to the presence of other unmanaged threats, poor entity condition, or reduced feasibility of control. • Control of feral animals identified as KTPs when the impacts of the animals may result in an entity becoming threatened. • Control of feral animals that harm a threatened entity on a localised level, but the entity is otherwise widespread across its range.

Priority category	Objective	Criteria
Medium – Stakeholder Priorities (M-SP)	Feral animal control to reduce impacts on NPWS values identified as a stakeholder priority, e.g. feral cat control following an increase in sightings by and concern from multiple community members	One or more of the following: • Control of feral animals that are impinging on values or assets important to stakeholders. • Control of feral animals that are included in a priority stakeholder plan or program, e.g. Good Neighbour or Landcare programs or Local Land Services' Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plans. • Control of feral animals as part of volunteer or cultural awareness programs that contribute to NPWS priorities and that promote skills, awareness and involvement with NPWS.
Low – Localised Priorities (L-LP)	Control of feral animals that have low or highly localised impacts, e.g. rabbit biocontrol along urban boundaries	One or more of the following: • Control of feral animals to maintain local, long-term feral animal programs. • Control of feral animals that have localised impacts and are not critical, high or medium priorities. • Control of feral animals that have localised impacts on historic heritage of local value.

KTP = key threatening process.