

Setting the scene

Many pest animals continue to thrive despite the best efforts of humans to eradicate them. Explanations can be found not only in the inconsistent attitudes of people to pests, but also in the special characteristics of a pest. Certain aspects of their biology, combined with habitat disturbance that provides favourable conditions, and a lack of predators and diseases that might otherwise limit their numbers, have all contributed to a pest's success in Australia.

Source: Penny Olsen. Australia's Pest Animals: New Solutions to Old Problems, Bureau of Resource Sciences and Kangaroo Press, 1998.



What to do

Choose one of the following established pest animals and apply it to the pest animal chart.

- ▶ fox
- ▶ rabbit
- ▶ feral pig
- ▶ feral goat
- ▶ dromedary camel

Pest Animal Chart

Pest characteristics	1. extent of establishment	2. maximum female lifespan	3. sexual maturity	4. offspring	5. migration pattern
Report on this criteria	Is the animal widespread or isolated? Provide a map to justify your explanation.	Is the female long lived or short lived?	At what age is the female sexually mature?	Describe the number of breeding events and offspring per year. Is it a seasonal or opportunistic breeder?	Is the animal sedentary or migratory? What is its range and preferred habitat? Is its distribution increasing?
Pest characteristics	6. diet	7. established elsewhere	8. first year of introduction	9. number of introductions	10. reason(s) for introduction
Report on this criteria	What is the animal's diet? Is it specific or broad?	Is it a pest overseas?	Provide historical information.	Have multiple introductions helped establishment?	Provide historical information.

Research the list of pest characteristics in the pest animal chart and report on each criteria. Complete an 800 word report which also includes the following:

- ▶ Summarise the population spread and the migration trends of the pest animal.
- ▶ What ability does this animal have to be able to adapt to different environments including disturbed and urban environments?
- ▶ How do the reproduction traits of the pest animal compare to a native animal which shares its preferred habitat?
- ▶ How does the diet of the pest animal compare to a native animal which shares its preferred habitat?
- ▶ Describe the various opinions of people to the pest animal and how this may have changed over time?
- ▶ List three successful characteristics of this pest animal and the negative effects it has on habitat biodiversity.
- ▶ Discuss the influence of multiple introductions on establishment success.

 **Feral fact**

Farm animals are still establishing themselves as pest animals in Australia. In 1999, an unknown number of fallow deer escaped from a farm on Kangaroo Island and have now established a breeding population at the north-western end of the island. The destruction caused by these feral deer includes damage to farmland, spread of weeds, competition with native animals and the destruction of unique habitats.