



**Feral cat eradication on  
Kangaroo Island  
2015-2030  
PROSPECTUS**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The negative impacts of feral cats on Kangaroo Island are considerable and include predation on over 50 native animal species, the spread of livestock diseases that impact production and profitability, and social impacts.

Kangaroo Island provides a unique opportunity to control and eradicate feral cats across an entire environmental region given its:

- border security (being an island);
- supportive local government on domestic cat management;
- community support for both domestic and feral cat control;
- long history of feral cat management and research on the island to inform control techniques;
- foxes, wild dogs and rabbits are absent from the island so will not confound monitoring and control activities;
- support from key stakeholders who are collaborating with the project to ensure Kangaroo Island is feral cat free by 2030.

The Prospectus details how feral cats will be eradicated by 2030 in conjunction with a gradual and systematic phasing out of all domestic cats. During this time a permit system with strict conditions will be implemented to regulate the keeping of all domestic cats.

The Kangaroo Island community has embraced reforms to manage domestic cats, including the previous introductions of by-laws which require de-sexing and micro-chipping of all domestic cats.

Funding (\$2,032,942) is currently being sought to implement Stage 1 (2015-2018) of a long term feral cat eradication program for the Island (2015-2030).

Stage 1 will:

- Trial a range of feral cat control techniques, including existing and new innovative tools, and assess the potential impacts on non-target species;
- Establish baseline monitoring to determine feral cat and prey abundance before and after feral cat control;
- Measure changes in the incidence of sarcosporidiosis in the livestock industry;
- Plan for the erection of a cat barrier across the Dudley Peninsula to maintain the gains in cat control;
- Implement a communication plan and coordinate and facilitate community involvement in the project;
- Consider legislative options for cat management under the *Natural Resources Management (NRM) Act 2004* and the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* following consultation with the community and Ministerial agreement; and,
- Establish a steering committee to advise and guide the eradication plan.

Stage 2 (2018-2021) will eradicate feral cats from the Dudley Peninsula; and Stage 3 (2021-2030) will eradicate feral cats from the entire island, including a phasing out of all cats on Kangaroo Island.

An integrated, holistic approach will be used with a range of control and monitoring techniques to prevent perverse outcomes, such as increases in rodent populations following feral cat removal. The approach will be operationally adaptive so that learnings are incorporated into project implementation and will rely on strong community support.

This project is a joint initiative of the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, Kangaroo Island Natural Resources Management Board, and Kangaroo Island Council, in collaboration with Primary Industries and Regions South Australia.

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# 1. BACKGROUND

Feral cats are a serious pest in Australia and can have significant impacts on native wildlife, livestock and humans. Predation by feral cats was listed as a Key Threatening Process under the Federal *Endangered Species Protection Act* in 1992 (now incorporated in the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* 1999). Feral cats can have direct and indirect impacts on native predators and they are hosts to a number of disease causing agents including viruses (three species), bacteria (>40 species), fungi (>17 species), Protozoa (21 species), helminthes (26 species) and arthropods (19 species) (Moodie 1995). Some of these can be transmitted to native species, particularly mammals, and also to livestock and humans. *Toxoplasma gondii* uses the cat as the definitive host and can affect native mammals as well as immune compromised people or pregnant women.

Kangaroo Island is located approximately 15 kms from the South Australian coastline and is Australia's third largest Island with a land mass of approximately 4,400 km<sup>2</sup> (441,600 ha). It is nationally important for biodiversity conservation, primary production and tourism, with nearly 50% of native vegetation remaining. It has a simple political and social environment with only one local council governing the whole region and a strong, cohesive community of around 4,500 residents.

Cats were established on Kangaroo Island by 1844 (Abbott 2008, citing Tolmer 1882). They are now distributed throughout, with feral cat activity higher around townships compared to bushland or pastoral areas.

On Kangaroo Island, feral cat predation is a major threat to the Island's unique and endemic fauna (Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts 2008). Dietary studies have shown that 35 species of bird, 11 species of mammal (including the endangered southern brown bandicoot), at least three species of reptile and at least one frog species are eaten by cats on Kangaroo Island (Paton 1994). Feral cats also cause substantial economic cost to the Kangaroo Island sheep industry through the spread of sarcosporidiosis and toxoplasmosis. Some Kangaroo Island producers have estimated a 65% reduction in the value of their meat through the spread of sarcosporidiosis which equates to a significant economic loss each year. The social impacts of feral cats on Kangaroo Island are also evident with cats wailing and defecating in public places and high visibility at tourist attractions such as in penguin and seal colonies.

Kangaroo Island provides an ideal opportunity to control feral cats across an entire environmental region for the following reasons:

1. Border protection is possible due to the limited transport opportunities on and off the island;
2. Domestic cat management is already enforced. Since 2005, a council by-law has required cat owners to register, desex and microchip cats and confine them to their property. Restrictions are also applied to the number of cats permitted per property and conditions applied to the keeping of breeding cats. Currently there are 244 registered cats with KI Council including one breeding cat;
3. The Kangaroo Island community has demonstrated its support for cat management with surveys in 1993 and 2005 showing >90% of respondents support both domestic and feral cat management and control measures. Another survey will be conducted in 2015 to confirm that this support is still current and to obtain community views on moving towards an entirely cat free Kangaroo Island;

4. Cat management and control research has been conducted on the Island since 1993, thus providing substantial information to inform further control programs (e.g. Bengsen et al. 2011);
5. Foxes, wild dogs and rabbits are absent from the island so will not confound monitoring and control activities;
6. Community sightings of feral cats have been recorded since 2005. The Feral Cat Scan APP, which is being developed by the Invasive Animal CRC, will be trialled on Kangaroo Island in 2015 and will provide a method to engage the community in cat management, facilitate collation and management of community sightings and will provide information on cat distribution and hot spots;
7. Key stakeholders are strongly supportive of and involved in the development of the project. The Kangaroo Island Natural Resources Management Board and Kangaroo Island Council have recently adopted a joint position statement with a vision that “Kangaroo Island is free of feral cats”.

This project is a joint initiative of Kangaroo Island Natural Resources Management Board, Natural Resources Kangaroo Island (Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources), and Kangaroo Island Council in collaboration with Primary Industries and Regions South Australia. This collaborative approach will continue with an overarching steering committee established to guide project direction.

## 2. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The long-term goal of this project is to eradicate feral cats on Kangaroo Island by 2030 with a general phasing out of domestic cats by this time.

The following objectives that have been adopted by the Kangaroo Island Natural Resources Management Board - Kangaroo Island Council in their joint position statement support this goal:

- Protect Kangaroo Island’s unique biodiversity and ecosystems
- Protect livestock health and hence primary production income
- Enhance the value of the Kangaroo Island brand (clean and green, natural, pristine)
- Improve ecotourism credibility
- Reduce the social impacts of feral cats
- Maintain and support community and stakeholder involvement in the eradication of feral cats from Kangaroo Island
- Ensure that domestic cats do not contribute to the feral cat problem through good legislation and adherence to the local government by-laws.

The three stages will be underpinned by the following specific activities:

**Stage 1 (2015-16 – 2017-18: 3 years) Trial feral cat control techniques, establish baseline monitoring programs and establish a process for gradual phasing out of all cats**

1. Consider legislative options for cat management under the *Natural Resources Management (NRM) Act 2004* and the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* following consultation with the community and Ministerial agreement.
2. Review previous cat control and prey monitoring programs on Kangaroo Island and elsewhere and identify the most appropriate methodologies for the project.
3. Establish and coordinate a steering committee representing key stakeholders to provide guidance, governance and ensure effective collaboration between the parties.
4. Develop a community engagement strategy (section 4.2) to inform and involve the community and stakeholders in project objectives and outcomes.
5. Trial a range of existing feral cat control techniques (e.g. baiting, trapping, shooting) as well as new and innovative tools, such as the grooming trap, sentinel bait devices and cat detection dogs, and measure potential impacts on non-target species.
6. Establish baseline monitoring programs for feral cats in different habitats including agricultural land, bushland, townships, and forestry using appropriate techniques such as camera traps, trapping and track plots/monitoring to determine effectiveness of control.
7. Establish baseline monitoring programs for key prey species (e.g. house mice, black rats and bandicoots) prior to implementing feral cat control, using appropriate techniques such as camera traps, trapping and track plots/monitoring and measure changes in population size.
8. Measure the incidence of sarcosporidiosis and changes in carcass trimming and rejection through analysis of abattoir surveillance data. (Attributing foetal loss in sheep to toxoplasmosis is beyond the scope of this project and its impact on primary production is lower than that of sarcosporidiosis).
8. Investigate options for an exclusion barrier (e.g. 1 km cat exclusion fence) across the Dudley Peninsula (Long and Robley 2004) to secure the 500 km<sup>2</sup> peninsula and enable all cat control trials in this area (Stage 1) to further the goal of achieving eradication of this peninsula (Stage 2) and ultimately the whole island (Stage 3).
9. Foster recognition of Kangaroo Island as a centre of excellence for the integration of research, monitoring and adaptive management using the feral cat eradication plan as an instrument, by liaising with other national and international cat control programs, integrating this knowledge, and value-adding to existing research.
10. Develop and implement a research plan to coordinate and maximise collaboration between the project, research groups and students.
11. Produce scientific reports that evaluate and document project findings and share learnings.
12. Develop and circulate an updated Prospectus for Stage 2.

**Stage 2 (2018-2021: 3 years): Eradicate feral cats from the Dudley Peninsula, monitor success of control and implement a gradual phasing out of all cat ownership**

1. Develop and implement a plan to eradicate feral cats from the Dudley Peninsula using control techniques that proved successful in Stage 1 and building upon cat control achieved and secured during Stage 1.
2. Construct a feral cat eradication barrier across the Dudley Peninsula to prevent incursions of feral cats.
3. Continue to monitor changes in the feral cat population, prey populations and prevalence of sarcosporidiosis and integrate the findings into the planning and management of the program.
4. Detect and address any issues relating to perverse outcomes resulting from feral cat control, such as increased rat or house mice numbers.
5. Secure agreement and develop policy and procedures for a phase out strategy for domestic cats.
6. Review and refine the project community engagement strategy.
7. Produce scientific reports that evaluate and document project findings, share learnings and continue to educate and inform all stakeholders.
8. Coordinate external review of the implementation of the plan.
9. Undertake preliminary planning for whole of Island eradication; and develop and circulate an updated Prospectus for Stage 3.

**Stage 3 (2021–2030: 9 years): Eradicate feral cats from Kangaroo Island, monitor success of control and implement a gradual phasing out of all cat ownership**

1. Develop and execute an Implementation Plan for feral cat eradication across the rest of Kangaroo Island.
2. Review, update and execute the community engagement strategy.
3. Continue to monitor the feral cat population, prey populations and prevalence of sarcosporidiosis and adapt the implementation of the eradication plan where required.
4. Detect issues relating to any perverse outcomes resulting from feral cat control, and execute tasks to address the issues.
5. Produce scientific reports that evaluate and document project findings, share learnings and continue to educate and inform all stakeholders.
6. Ensure ongoing community support, policy and legislation are in place to phase out domestic cat ownership, with flexibility to allow for some cat ownership, subject to strict conditions.

### 3. STAGE 1 OUTPUTS

1. Project team recruited.
2. Project steering committee established.
3. Stage 1 project plan developed and implemented.
4. Community engagement strategy developed and implemented (see section 4.2).
5. A range of feral cat control techniques tested and refined, including novel tools and tactics.
6. Feral cat and key prey populations monitored before and after feral cat control.
7. Incidence of sarcosporidiosis monitored along with changes in carcass trimming and rejection.
8. Domestic cat management by-laws continue to be enforced to ensure domestic cats do not contribute to the feral cat population.
9. A strategy for a barrier on Dudley Peninsula developed for implementation in Stage 2.
10. A "quarantine" strategy developed for the Island's entry points to prevent immigration and accidental releases of cats.
11. Reports produced relating to public perceptions of domestic cat management, the effectiveness of feral cat eradication techniques trialled, and best cat management options for long-term cat control on KI.
12. Legislative and policy reform recommended that supports a gradual phase out of cat ownership, while allowing some flexibility for cat ownership on a case by case merit.

### 4. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

#### 4.1 Steering committee

A steering committee will be established at the start of the project to guide project direction and ensure organisational, government and community support. It may include community, agency and researcher representation such as Natural Resources Kangaroo Island and other DEWNR staff, Kangaroo Island Natural Resources Management Board members, Kangaroo Island Council councillors, Australian Government Threatened Species Commissioner representation, Australian Government's Department of Environment, research institutions, species experts, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) and Primary Industries and Regions South Australia (PIRSA).

A technical working group may also be established to provide advice on control and monitoring techniques.

#### 4.2 Community engagement strategy

A community engagement strategy will be developed in Stage 1 and implemented in all stages to ensure project objectives are achieved. This will include the following components:

1. a stakeholder analysis to identify key issues relating to each group, potential risks and best ways of communicating and interfacing with them

2. a strategic, targeted landholder and residents information and education campaign on cat management and KI Council by-laws;
3. an education campaign to target school children on Kangaroo Island and ensure cat management awareness is integrated in the school curricula;
4. guidelines for information dissemination to ensure the community and other stakeholders throughout Australia are kept informed regularly of project outcomes;
5. strategies to promote the newly developed Feral Cat Scan APP amongst the Kangaroo Island community;
6. communication tools to be used including fliers, posters and web based products, and
7. champions on Kangaroo Island engaged to promote project outcomes.

A survey of the Kangaroo Island community to obtain current views on cat management and a cat-free Kangaroo Island will be carried out prior to Stage 1.

### 4.3 Stakeholders

- Kangaroo Island community members
- Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) which includes the region, *Natural Resources Kangaroo Island*
- Kangaroo Island NRM Board
- Kangaroo Island Council
- South Australian Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation
- Threatened Species Commissioner
- Australian Government Departments of Environment and Agriculture
- Primary Industries and Regions South Australia
- Agriculture Kangaroo Island
- Kangaroo Island farmers
- Tourism Kangaroo Island
- Sealink

### 4.4 Links to other projects

The proposed project will link with:

- Kangaroo Island NRM plan
- Kangaroo Island climate change adaptation plan
- Natural Resources Kangaroo Island Bandicoot Project
- Natural Resources Kangaroo Island Pest Animal Control project funded by state and Australian governments
- Kangaroo Island Council domestic cat management

- Green Army funded by the Australian Government
- Invasive Animal Cooperative Research Centre Feral Scan
- Ecological Horizons (Dr. John Read) - grooming trap development
- Agriculture Kangaroo Island projects
- Disease surveillance unit, PIRSA and abattoirs
- Kangaroo Island Veterinary Clinic
- The University of Adelaide, Associate Professor Phil Cassey
- University of Canberra, Professor Stephen Sarre
- University of Adelaide, Associate Professor David Paton
- University of Tasmania, Associate Professor Menna Jones
- Biosecurity SA, Dr David Peacock, and The University of Adelaide, Senior lecturer Philip Stott
- NSW Department of Primary Industries Vertebrate Pest Unit

## 5. EXPECTED DURATION

**Stage 1:** continue to manage the domestic cat by-laws; trial control options and implement monitoring and management programs to assess success of feral cat control; policies developed for the gradual phase out of cat ownership (with provisions for ownership under permit subject to a governing process).

**July 2015 to July 2018 (three years)**

**Stage 2:** eradicate feral cats from the Dudley Peninsula, monitoring and evaluation in place to assess success of control; policies in place for gradual phase out of cat ownership (with provisions for ownership under permit subject to a governing process).

**July 2018 to July 2021 (three years)**

**Stage 3:** continue to eradicate feral cats from Kangaroo Island, monitoring and evaluation advanced, policy implemented for gradual phase out of cat ownership (with provisions for ownership under permit subject to a governing process).

**July 2021 to July 2030 (nine years)**

## 6. CONSTRAINTS AND RISKS

Constraint	Explanation
Adequate funding	Adequate resourcing will be required to implement all stages of the project.
Efficacy of feral cat control techniques	This project relies on effective feral cat control techniques being determined over large areas in Stage 1. The grooming trap will be trialled in the first instance as one of these new tools.
Non-target impacts on native wildlife	The potential for negative impacts on native species must be examined prior to feral cat control.
Potential for increase in abundance of house mice and rats through feral cat removal	Changing meso-predator interactions through the removal of feral cats may result in an increase in house mouse and black rat abundance with possible knock on impacts on other native flora and fauna and social/human health, possibly resulting in negative repercussions for the program. This may require the allocation of additional resources to address these new issues.
Remote areas and restricted access	Remote and isolated terrain poses challenges for the successful control and/or eradication of feral cats over large areas.
Community support	This project relies on the Kangaroo Island community (both rural and urban) continuing to support a long term goal of feral cat eradication on Kangaroo Island.

## 7. ASSUMPTIONS

1. Project partners will continue to work collaboratively towards long-term feral cat eradication on Kangaroo Island for the life of the program;
2. Relevant Ministers, Departments, stakeholders and the community will continue their support for and involvement in the program;
3. Feral cat control techniques are shown to be effective over a large area of Kangaroo Island in Stage 1;
4. All landholders in the rural community will be targeted for both domestic and feral cat management and eradication of feral cats (as well as urban/peri-urban for domestic cat management).
5. Grooming traps will be used in conjunction with other existing and novel techniques.
6. The Feral Cat Scan APP will be developed by the Invasive Animal Cooperative Research Centre in 2015;
7. Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources staff will continue to assist with the development and implementation of the program;
8. The steering committee will represent key stakeholders including the community and will be effective in providing guidance for the project and ensuring widespread support;

9. Annual monitoring of feral cats will be conducted pre and post control, followed by two years of monitoring, before a declaration of eradication can be confidently made (note: an assessment by external experts may be required);
10. Meso-predator release may result in unacceptable increases in house mice or black rat numbers across the Island but a strategy will be adopted to ensure there is an overall net conservation and primary production benefit from eradicating feral cats;
11. This project will be implemented consistently with relevant policies and legislation and will adhere to standards outlined in animal ethics permits. RSPCA will be invited to contribute to the development and implementation of the eradication plan to ensure that animal welfare expectations and requirements are met; and
12. Legislative options under the *Natural Resources Management (NRM) Act 2004* and the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* will be explored.

## 8. STAGE 1 RESOURCES AND BUDGET

### Resources

LEAD	Natural Resources Kangaroo Island
PROJECT TEAM [3 FTE]:	Project Manager PO3 (1 FTE) Project Officer PO1 (1 FTE), Field Assistant OPS 1-2 (1 FTE). In-kind from KI Council, Natural Resources KI, PIRSA, Biosecurity SA and Invasive Animal CRC staff

### Annual budget for Stage 1

<i>Item</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>In-kind</i>	<i>Funding sought</i>	<i>Total cost</i>
<b>Salaries</b>				
Project management	Oversee the project and coordinate implementation and report writing.	\$12,000 DEWNR (Regional Manager & PAM Unit manager)	\$108,849 project officer PO3 (1.0 FTE)	\$120,849
Feral cat control and monitoring	Trial feral cat control devices, establish monitoring programs, collate and analyse data and reports	\$15,500 Volunteers Green Army NRKI Pest Animal Control team	\$135,418 project officer and field assistant (2 FTE)	\$150,918
Manage domestic cats	Peri-urban domestic cat management	\$8,000 KI Council (0.1 FTE) (0.2)	\$8,000 KI Council (0.1 FTE)	\$16,000
Monitor sarcosporidiosis	Monitor sarcosporidiosis levels and impacts on the profitability of sheep production	\$10,000 PIRSA \$10,000 AGKI		\$20,000
Community engagement	Develop and implement a project community engagement strategy	\$15,000 NRKI in collaboration with KI Council	\$15,000 NRKI	\$30,000
	Rural landholders- build awareness and action to support eradication	\$101,000 NRKI		\$101,000
	Urban/peri-urban domestic cat owners- build awareness and action to support eradication	\$10,000 NRKI and KI Council and PIRSA		\$10,000
	Development of the Feral Cat Scan APP and reporting of sightings	\$130,000 KI community \$15,000 NRKI and KI Council and PIRSA TBC Invasive Animal CRC		\$145,000*
Expert advice	Advice from consultants on grooming trap use, data	\$8,800 Biosecurity SA	\$28,000	\$36,800*

	analysis and project design	TBC Invasive Animal CRC		
Steering committee	Oversee project direction and implementation (8 people, meetings 2 h quarterly), sitting fees for some members e.g. mayor.	\$1,500	\$8,000	\$9,500
NRKI staff contribution	NRKI staff advice and input on feral cat control and cat/prey monitoring	\$10,000		\$10,000
Student projects	Assist students researching topics related to the project objectives	\$160,000	\$40,000	\$200,000
<b>Sub total-salaries</b>		<b>\$506,800</b>	<b>\$343,267</b>	<b>\$850,067</b>
<b>Operating costs</b>				
	Vehicle - fuel, registration, repairs, lease hire		\$14,000	\$14,000
Training and travel	Training and travel to disseminate information for steering committee and project team		\$13,000	\$13,000
Cat management	50 remote cameras, batteries, iPad, radios, chargers, safety communication, baits, arcview licences etc	\$8,000 NRKI	\$75,000	\$83,000
	Trial feral cat control techniques This includes \$50K each year for the grooming trap Disposal of trapped cats	\$16,000 NRKI TBC KI Veterinary Clinic*	\$110,000	\$126,000
	Peri-urban domestic cat management	\$2,000 KI Council \$91,000 KI community	\$1,600 KI Council	\$94,600
Cat exclusion across Dudley Peninsula	Investigate and implement a barrier to exclude cats from the Dudley Peninsula		\$10,000	\$10,000
Community engagement	Steering committee - catering, printing, meetings	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000
	NRKI community engagement products e.g. fliers, posters, website, field day displays	\$7,000	\$5,000	\$12,000
Administration	DEWNR Administration charge (3 FTE)		\$72,000	\$72,000
<b>Sub total operating</b>		<b>\$125,000</b>	<b>\$301,600</b>	<b>\$426,600</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>\$631,800</b>	<b>\$644,867</b>	<b>\$1,276,667</b>

\*TBC in-kind contribution will be confirmed once project is implemented

### Summary of funds sought for Stage 1- 2015-2018

	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Salaries	\$343,267	\$360,430	\$378,451
Operating	\$301,600	\$316,680	\$332,514
<b>Total**</b>	<b>\$644,867</b>	<b>\$677,110</b>	<b>\$710,965</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>			<b>\$2,032,942</b>

\*\*Includes 5% CPI increase each year

Costings for Stages 2 and 3 will be dependent on outcomes from Stage 1 and will be guided by previous national and international island cat eradications e.g. Faure Island- 4,561 ha; Western Australia, \$4/ha; (Algar *et al.* 2010) and San Nicholas Island- 5,896 ha; CA, USA, \$500/ha (ca. \$US2.9 million; Hanson *et al.* 2015).

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