

IDEAS FROM PLCM EVENTS

An information sheet for conservation-minded landholders and others interested in conservation land management

Theme Feral animal control

Source event Adding complexity to restoration sites – field day at Berry 19/09/24

Landcare host Shoalhaven Landcare

Traditional Country Dharawal



“ So generally, a cat or fox would be here at night, eating frogs out of this drainage line and into this dam ”

Ryan Wall
Fox Control Program Coordinator
Shoalhaven Landcare

Cage trapping for foxes and cats

Topic Some practicalities, tips, and problems to avoid when cage trapping for foxes and cats.

Key points

Foxes and cats are a huge threat to native species, and have contributed to population declines and extinctions across Australia.

We need to lift our game with fox and cat control, or more native species will be lost.

Cage trapping can be an excellent way to give vulnerable native species a break from fox and cat predation.

An integrated program, considering all options is usually best, but shooting, baiting and other techniques may not always be practical or legal.

Keep animal ethics in mind – e.g. if you set a trap, you must be able to check it at least once a day.

Planning and organisation are essential – e.g. if you trap a cat or fox, how do you kill and dispose of it?

Some training and experience is needed – if a fox or cat sets off, then escapes from a poorly set trap, it will learn to stay away in future.

Doing nothing is usually better than a poorly planned or incompetent trapping effort – so relax and take your time.

Creativity and innovation might be needed to lure cats into traps.

New innovations in fox and cat management are becoming available – these might help us get the upper hand.

Presenter Ryan Wall, Fox Control Program Coordinator at Shoalhaven Landcare

“ Today we’re doing all this beautiful tree planting and restoring habitat around this dam –

we can build all these things, and bring native wildlife back, like bandicoots – but the feral cats are here waiting

So this would be an ideal spot to set the cage trap

We use a lot of these traps in the peri-urban setting where we can’t use other methods like baiting or shooting. And sometimes we use these in conjunction.

The first thing I’ll say is that if you’re going to set any trap, you must check it every day – that is the rule

So using things like cooked chicken works well for cats. But also possums love those. So you will catch brushtail possums. So we check the trap daily.

The other thing you need is a means of disposing of the fox

So that’s your own firearms licence or someone you’ve got contact with that can quickly come and dispatch that animal.



Habitat log pile constructed during the workshop. We attempted to protect small native fauna by blocking cat-sized holes, but a well-planned cage trapping program could give them an even better chance.



PRIVATE LAND CONSERVATION MATTERS

Landcare NSW and the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust are working together to raise awareness, and support private land conservation efforts across the state.



Set up a wildlife camera

Get a camera out into a place where it's got a few different elements – water source, a couple of trails that meet – get that camera there and leave it in the same spot. Check it monthly.

You might pick up a quoll after 12 months. But if you just put a camera out for a month, you might not see anything but foxes and rabbits.

Chose the location carefully and be prepared to wait.

So trap placement, like camera placement, is more than one element.

It's not 'I've seen a fox so lets go and set a trap'.

The longer that trap is there, the better, because it becomes part of the landscape

I like to have a trap set all the time. The idea is that by the time a fox moves into a block, it's too late. You might be seeing them once every now and then, but if you were out all night and used thermal imaging – you'd probably see 3 or 4 a night here.

So having something set all the time, replacing the bait, is a really good option – although it takes work.

The fox comes past on the first night and just looks at it and goes: 'I'm not going near that' but months down the

track, or weeks down the track, will walk in and set that trap off and be caught.

Disguise the trap

Have it up against a bush – have a tree fern or something hanging over the edge. Just make it part of the landscape.

Try a scent lure

A scent lure can gives the fox confidence to say that another fox has been in that trap, so it will walk in without much resistance.

They do work – it just worries me that people set traps without some of these tips and ideas

What happens is a fox will jump up on top of this to try and get to the bait, and set that off – and will never go near a trap again.



So you can buy some at Bunnings, you can buy it from the rural store, but if they are set badly, you're doing the reverse effect of what you set out to do.

There are two main types



The tread plate trap

These ones with a tread plate particularly pick up non-targets like possums, but nothing gets injured.

The fox needs to come in underneath a door with these.

A lot of people set them and the door might be down like this – and I really don't like that.



A fox does not like to feel wire under its feet, and nor does a feral cat. So, if you were setting this, you would have whatever's on the floor, like leaf litter, cover completely the floor and the tread plate – without interfering with that treadplate going down – and have your bait at the very back.

The other thing that I do is paint the inside black, and the tread plate black as well, and I go black mesh. And that's particularly for feral cats.

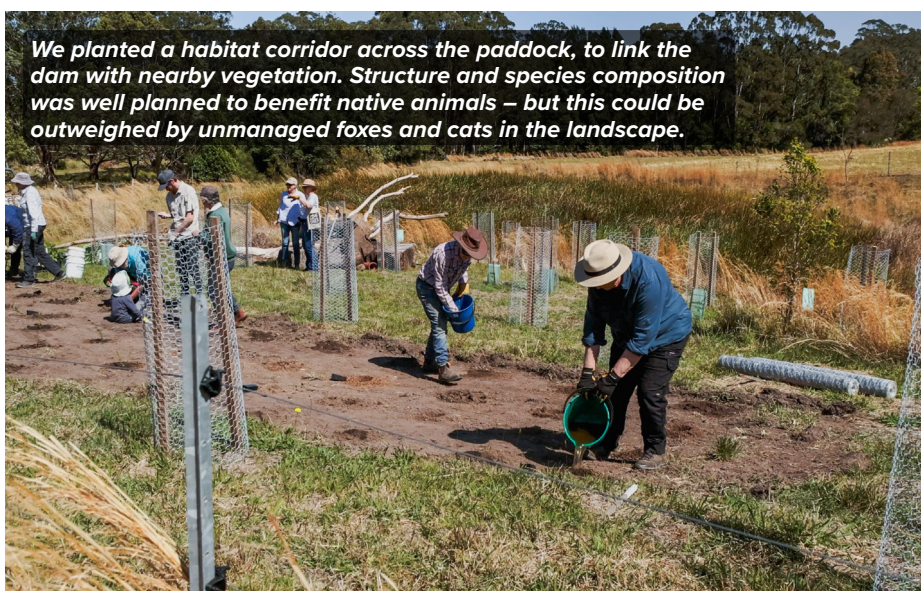
Put black shade cloth over the top, and it looks like a burnt log.



The slide door trap

You use a different bait. The fox has to pull on the chook at the back to drop that door down.

And again, covering the floor, have it up against a bush, doing all those things, checking it daily, and letting it sit for a long time. ”



We planted a habitat corridor across the paddock, to link the dam with nearby vegetation. Structure and species composition was well planned to benefit native animals – but this could be outweighed by unmanaged foxes and cats in the landscape.

Josh Guthrie with a cat trap placed close to a road edge. The trap is normally disguised with plant material – but was uncovered while the tour group visited.

Source event Tour of the Australian Wildlife Conservancy property Waulinbakh at Stroud, 19/09/24
Landcare host Mid Coast 2 Tops (MC2T) Landcare Connection
Traditional Country Worimi

“ **We’ve got cage traps out at the moment for foxes and cats** ”



Presenter Josh Guthrie
 Senior Land Management Officer at Australian Wildlife Conservancy

After our initial survey done by the science team, we picked up quite a lot of cats and foxes. Along with a few other ferals, like pigs.

Cats and foxes seem to be the most impactful – and probably cats on the top of the list

We purchased these traps, and they were actually smaller than ones that we ordered. So we are trying to get some larger ones so that we can catch both cats and foxes.

We’ve had 16 traps out for three weeks. Using baits like chicken, tinned fish. Trying to lure them in with food.

We also had camera traps set up on each trap to monitor what activity we were getting. You know, if a cat might walk past, suss it out, and leave.

We did see quite a lot of cats going past, and not really paying too much attention to the bait. In that three weeks, we caught one cat. And we had a little bit of bycatch with native animals, which we just released.

Some lure ideas – because, as cat owners know, it can be very difficult to entice a cat into a trap

So at the moment, we’re just really testing what works here. I’ve not done too much cat management, but from what I’ve heard, every cat’s different.

The terrain and habitat in which cats live is completely different. So we’re trying to test out different methods to see what works best here.

So after we used the food bait, it was recommended to use more of a visual lure. So I went out to the op shop and bought some little shiny birds to see if it works. And we have dream catchers with little feathers, just to see what intrigues the cats.



Josh with a scent lure – inside the polypipe is a sponge soaked in cat urine.

Remote sensing can replace physical trap checking

We’re also looking into getting devices that sense if the cage has been triggered. Every day I’ve got to go out and check these, and it will take me two or three hours. If I had more traps out, it would take me half a day. So these devices will actually send me a notification if it’s been triggered.



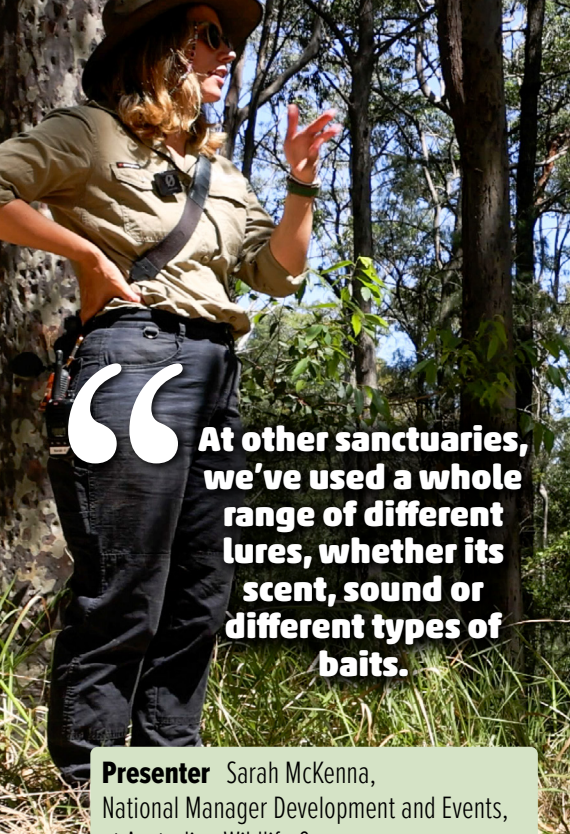
Cat traps with sight lures and polypipe containing a scent lure.

And last week, we actually came across something else. We came across a roadkill, which was a fresh cat. And I’d been told that urine and faeces from the cats are a good lure to bring in ferals. I had the wonderful job to dissect that which I didn’t enjoy.

And now this little white tube in the back here has a little sponge in it. I’m not going to touch it because it’s soaked in pee! That scent – whether it’s a territorial thing, I believe – the cat should hopefully come into the trap. Suss it out to see what’s happening.

Bait and lure ideas from the group

- KFC – you can hang it off the of the roof of the cage with some feathers to add a sort of visual movement.
- We use rabbit as well – and chickens.
- You could try a ball of wool.
- I used a baked dinner once – that worked.



“ At other sanctuaries, we’ve used a whole range of different lures, whether its scent, sound or different types of baits.

Presenter Sarah McKenna,
National Manager Development and Events,
at Australian Wildlife Conservancy

Because we’ve been here for 18 months now, it’s just about trial and error for what’s the most effective and cost effective.

You can use sound lures that replicate the sound of an injured rabbit.

We’ve used sight lures – old CDs have worked. Cats are very inquisitive. They’ll come in to see something shiny. And we’ve used pheromones, and other sort of scent lures. But it just varies. And you do a bit of trial and error to try and find the most effective attractant.

Other fox and cat control methods

Some of the other methods we use across other sanctuaries ...

Opportunistic shooting

New technology like the Felixer

That actually uses LiDAR technology to identify a cat. It’s a little box-like thing that has about 20 capsules of 1080 in it. When a cat goes past, it’ll identify that it’s a cat, and will spray it with the 1080 toxin. And because cats are prolific groomers, it will lick the toxin off itself.

1080 baiting

In other areas we do use 1080 baits for controlling cats and foxes. Particularly with foxes we will use baits – whether it’s injecting chicken wings or other types of meat bait. And we’ll bury them. But we have to collect them up every seven days because 1080 breaks down in the environment. Once that happens, if, say, a fox, takes it, it’ll be a sublethal dose, and it can cause bait aversion. So you will not likely get that fox again.

Canid pest ejectors (CPE) to deliver liquid 1080

Basically, it’s a spring action system. It’s drilled into the ground. And it

has a little ball on top which you put bait around. It requires an upward pull of 2.5 kilos, and that triggers a spring system.

We put a little 1080 capsule inside, and that spring shoots through the 1080 and it causes it to spray straight into the salivary glands of an animal. So once it’s set, we don’t have to go and check them. If it is triggered we know that is a kill.

When we were doing the trials for them, we had to test if there was any sort of bycatch – so whether native animals could trigger it. So we would set them, and smooth out a sand plot so we could see what animals were using the area. And we found a lot of native animals – they will eat around the bait, but they couldn’t actually get the strength to pull it up.

1080 and native animals

A fox only needs to consume a third of it [a bait] to be lethal. A cat about half. Something like a wedge tail eagle – it’s about 15 [baits], but over quick succession. So we stagger our baits 500 metres apart. And with the canid pest ejectors, sort of every kilometre. So it’s very unlikely a native animal like a wedge tailed eagle, or even a kangaroo or whatnot, could actually travel the distance to consume the amount for it to be lethal. And because 1080 is derived from a native plant in WA, native species tend to have a higher tolerance to it.

Other tips and reminders

- Although we are controlling pests, it’s still really important to consider animal ethics. We don’t want to cause unnecessary suffering and harm. Refer to sources like [PestSmart](#) for more guidance. (PestSmart has a great breakdown on how to shoot a fox to minimise pain and suffering.)
- It’s important to keep records of where your traps are located, this will help you and anyone else keep track of what traps are active and where they are.

- Check traps every day, preferably in the morning. If you are keeping traps active during the day, please also check in the afternoon.
- Put shade cloth over the top to shelter any captured animal from the elements. If the weather is looking grim (too hot or cold), consider avoiding trapping.
- Securing the trap to the ground with pegs is important, it will help prevent the trap from flipping if it catches an animal.

Ideas for action

- Monitor with wildlife cameras to better understand what’s going on with native and feral species before you start trapping.
- Prior to active efforts like trapping, there are ways to reduce the impact of pests, including removing weeds and warrens that you know harbour pest species.
- Eradicating pests from the landscape is rarely achieved. It’s important to remember that pest control is done best as a coordinated approach with multiple landholders. Contact your local authorities like LLS or other groups that are actively controlling pests in the landscape – maybe you can join an existing program or get guidance on how best to approach control on your property.
- Before undertaking trapping, consider all your options including 1080 baiting or CPE systems. Talk to your local authorities like LLS for more information.

Thanks to the organisers, presenters, participants and agency staff, who allowed us to record this event, and assisted in developing this resource.

The main text is derived from speaker’s quotes. Captions and green headings are additions.

Design, editing and images: Little Gecko media.
Created for Landcare NSW, 24/01/25.

For further information

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