



WET TROPICS MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

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Feral deer spotting campaign launched in Wet Tropics

The public is being asked to help spot feral deer in the Wet Tropics. The 'deer spotting' campaign will help to raise public awareness about feral deer and to prevent them spreading throughout the Wet Tropics.

The Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) today launched a feral deer education program and asked for public support to find deer and assess their impact on the natural environment and agricultural crops.

"We need the public to be our eyes and ears and to report feral deer sightings to our free hotline 1800 119 829," said WTMA executive director Josh Gibson. "We need to know where the feral deer have been seen and how many there are. All calls to the hotline will be recorded and followed up by officers from state or local government agencies. The hotline will be active for an initial period of three months.

"Posters and fact sheets about feral deer and the education program will be available at all local council offices or from the Authority."

Ms Gibson said that research by Dr Simon Hudson, through the Rainforest CRC, found that feral deer are much more widespread in the Wet Tropics than first thought. The research also found that several deer species have the capacity to adapt to the Wet Tropics, to breed rapidly and to cause significant environmental damage.

"International experience has shown that browsing and grazing of feral deer can cause permanent damage to understorey vegetation in both rainforest areas and surrounding woodlands. Deer can also compete with native animals for food resources, cause erosion, contaminate streams, and spread weeds and diseases," Ms Gibson said.

"Landholders have expressed concern that growing numbers of feral deer will cause even greater damage to their agricultural crops, particularly fruit orchards. Wandering feral deer may also become a traffic hazard," she said.

"WTMA is working closely with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water, and the Far North Queensland Local Government Pest Plan Advisory Committee to identify the location of feral deer populations and to work out how best to control them. The feral deer education program is funded by the Australian Government through the Natural Heritage Trust.

"We are hoping that, with the support of the community, we will be able to get on top of the feral deer problem before they become a major animal pest," she said.



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