

# Killing in the name of conservation

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Thanks to the introduction of various non-native species to Australia throughout history, the country is overrun with feral animals. A new application developed by ecologists at the University of Adelaide to be published in the first issue of *Methods in Ecology and Evolution*, the new journal from the British Ecological Society, aims to improve the success of wildlife managers tasked with eradicating such problems.

Often, strategies employed by government and wildlife managers can be at best controversial, such as the recent internationally reported plans to cull vast numbers of feral camels, and at worst a catalyst for an even bigger problem. This was witnessed on Macquarie Island, where the eradication of wild cats led to a ten-fold increase in the rabbit population, likely to cost \$24 million to resolve. A research study highlighting this latter example was published last year in the British Ecological Society's *Journal of Applied Ecology*.

Now, a paper published in the inaugural issue of the British Ecological Society's new journal, *Methods in Ecology and Evolution*, aims to help wildlife managers plan any culling strategies more effectively by modelling the financial and population impact of their planned strategy using a spreadsheet-based application which the authors have made available online.

"Unfortunately, a lot of money tends to be wasted in Australia on reducing the damage that feral species cause," said co-author Corey Bradshaw from the University of Adelaide. "This is because density reduction culling programmes aren't usually done with much

forethought, organisation or associated research.

Our Excel-spreadsheet 'Spatio-Temporal Animal Reduction' (S.T.A.R.) model is designed specifically to optimise the culling strategies for feral pigs, buffalo and horses in Kakadu National Park (northern Australia), but our aim was to make it easy enough for anyone to use and modify it so that it could be applied to any invasive species anywhere.

Our hope is that wildlife managers responsible for safeguarding the biodiversity of places like Kakadu National Park actually use this tool to maximise their efficiency."

Provided by Wiley

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