



# Feral animals costing Australia dearly

by Special Project Officer - Hunting & Environment, Matthew Godson

The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA) is calling on all its members to assist the Australian environment and get involved in conservation hunting to reduce the impact of feral animals on this country. Many thousands of members with skills developed through years of target and field shooting should be utilised as a key asset in the fight to minimise the damage caused by feral animals.

On the back of the report *Counting the Cost: Impact of Invasive Animals in Australia 2004* by the Cooperative Research Centre for Pest Animal Control, the SSAA is of the opinion that plenty of work needs to be done to control the feral animal menace and they have the conservation hunters willing to do their part.

The *Counting the Cost* report conservatively totalled the cost impact of feral animals to be **\$720 million per year**, with planned subsequent reports expected to produce higher environmental and social costs. Foxes, rabbits, feral pigs and feral cats were reported as being responsible for 83% of all economic loss inflicted. However, most of these animals can be easily targeted by conservation hunters.

The *Counting the Cost* report estimated the economic impact cost of foxes to be \$227.5 million per year. Other feral animals and their estimated economic impact cost per year



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are: rabbits \$113.11 million, feral cats \$146 million, feral pigs \$106.5 million, feral goats \$7.74 million, wild dogs (dingoes and feral dogs) \$66.3 million and feral camels \$0.21 million.

All of these feral animals can be targeted by conservation hunters individually or in organised control programs in conjunction with other measures currently in place to reduce feral animal populations. The cost to the community of such activities is very low because, like many thousands of people across the country each day, conservation hunters volunteer their time and related costs to be involved in valuable conservation activities.

Support the conservation hunter today and help reduce the damage that feral animals do to this great land we call Australia. ●

