

NATIONALS

MARK VAILE

**Deputy Prime Minister
Leader of The Nationals**

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Coalition to tackle the feral animal menace

A re-elected Coalition Government will provide funding of \$15 million for a new programme to strengthen the fight against pest and feral animals and the threat they pose to Australia's agricultural industries and environment.

Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of The Nationals, Mark Vaile, announced the policy in Tully, in Far North Queensland today.

"It's estimated pest and feral animals directly cost Australian agriculture more than \$720 million per annum, not including the long-term losses associated with land degradation," Mr Vaile said.

"They also wreak havoc on our native flora and fauna. The Coalition recognises these costs and will build on previous programmes and work with local communities to tackle the scourge of feral animals.

"Foxes and rabbits have the biggest impact on biodiversity but feral pigs, goats, mice, carp, dogs, cane toads, camels, cats and horses are also a costly problem.

"This new programme will ensure a national approach to the management, and possible eradication, of some of Australia's worst pest animals," Mr Vaile said.

The new programme will include:

- A community grants component with a focus on controlling pest animals during drought to enhance agricultural and environmental recovery following drought (\$6 million);
- A research and development component, including a demonstration project, to test new feral animal control techniques and facilitate their implementation (\$1 million); and
- A fund to address the impact of nationally significant pest animals on priority national environmental assets (\$8 million).

Mr Vaile said this was another example of the Coalition working with local communities to help them tackle their problems.

"Providing grants directly to local communities will allow them to identify the regional priorities and address them as they see fit.

"This package will provide the resources to implement the Australian Pest Animal Strategy which has been developed by the Australian, State and Territory governments after consultation with those most affected by feral animals," Mr Vaile said.

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