

# GPA, SSAA team up on biosecurity



By [Gregor Heard](#)

June 2 2023 - 5:30am



Wild pigs are becoming an increasingly big problem for farmers across the country. File photo.

THE HUNTING community play a key service to farmers in the biosecurity space in their efforts in controlling feral species capable of causing great damage to crops and livestock such as foxes, pigs and deer.

However, on the flip side, there is the potential for these same hunters to unwittingly cause a biosecurity incursion, tramping unseen rust spores or other diseases into crops.

With this in mind Grain Producers Australia (GPA) and the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (SSAA) have set up a new partnership to ensure more of the former and less of the latter.

GPA chairman Barry Large said there had been a serious escalation in pest animals, in particular pigs and said this had created the temptation to circumnavigate property access rules in order to prevent serious crop damage.

However, he said farmers still needed to be accountable as to who was coming onto their properties.

"Farmers can't conduct the basic surveillance and inspections for hitchhiker pests if people are accessing our properties without us knowing about it," he said.

With this in mind the two groups have launched the 'Secure Our Farms - Hunt BioAware' partnership to share and promote resources and communications to help boost community education and understanding about biosecurity preventions.

At its end SSAA National is releasing a new educational video to promote basic biosecurity steps that need to be followed when entering properties, such as vehicle and personal hygiene, and advice on the importance of communicating with farmers about their specific biosecurity requirements. Mr Large said it was impossible to overstate the importance of keeping both plant and animal diseases out.

It has been estimated that a large multi-state foot-and-mouth outbreak would cost livestock producers more than \$52 billion over a ten-year period. An ACIL Allen report in 2019 on the potential incursion of African swine fever into the Australian pork sector estimated total economic losses between \$1.5 to \$2 billion under a high-spread scenario over five years. In the grains sector there are equally big risks, from pests such as karnal bunt or Khapra beetle.

"Someone entering a farm without the farmers' knowledge and not following the right protocols also risks spreading serious biosecurity risks, which could decimate our \$28 billion cropping sector," Mr Large said.

SSAA national wildlife programs leader Matthew Godson welcomed the new partnership to help raise awareness in the community with proactive actions and sharing of vital resources, saying it was good to work with an organisation that recognised the benefits the hunting community had on agriculture.

"We are proactive in educating the 212,000 members of our state and territory associations in ethics, safety and biodiversity protocols," he said.

"Through our SSAA Farmer Assist program we work to connect landowners with volunteer hunters who support pest animal control efforts in farming communities and help reduce the impacts pest animals have on the environment and wider agricultural industry."

Mr Godson said farm biosecurity was serious business and all visitors must follow landholder instructions to mitigate any risks on or off the property, including vehicle hygiene.

He said footwear and clothing may need some special attention depending on the current biosecurity risk situation and protocols in place at a particular property.

"Diseases, pests and weeds can enter a farm and be spread by equipment and vehicles, either directly or in plant material, soil or manure.

Maintaining equipment hygiene and ensuring all vehicles that visit a property are clean and well maintained is important," he said.