

How hunters and pig doggers could help conservationists

By [Phil Brandel](#)

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Acting Vice President of the Australian Pig Doggers and Hunters Association, Ned Makim, Inverell.

Hunters and shooters could be next in line to help scientists in managing the feral pig problem in Australia, if one peak body has its way.

At this week's national feral pig conference in Cairns, Qld, stakeholders from across the country shared ideas and data in the hope of tackling Australia's feral pig issue.

One of the speakers was the acting vice president of the Australian Pig Doggers and Hunters Association, Ned Makim, who claimed that his group represented more than 121,000 hunters.

During his speech he proposed the idea of using hunters to work as volunteer citizen scientists and data collectors for pig research.

"Recreational hunters are in daily contact with Australia's feral pig population," he said

"Hunters present a significant resource that is available to the community that can help us understand the feral pig problem.

"Aside from the fact that they remove thousands of feral pigs through hunting while pouring money into regional Australia, we could be using hunters to collect data and samples,"

Rather than a build it and they will come philosophy, Mr Makim is interested to hear from the scientific community or anyone interested in data collection.

"I want to offer everyone that is interested in the feral pig issue access to this group of volunteers as part of a mutually beneficial collaborative venture, by using us (APDHA) as the means of communication with the hunting cohort," he said.

"Hunters by their nature are always collecting information about pig behaviour, pig habitats and ecology, that's how they become successful hunters in their area.

"They understand when the pigs are going to breed or where they are going to be be."

Mr Makim said that hunters are already collecting data while out in the field.

"They are always collecting data that is what makes them a successful hunter," he said.

"They don't just randomly bump into animals, they have to learn the patterns.

"There is space for government agencies and land managers and indigenous groups to access that knowledge through us and we would love to help in the gathering of that knowledge."

Mr Makim said that the APDHA would then go to their members to carry out the research or data collection.

"There is a resource here that can be accessed, we are happy to make any research or data requests fit whatever may be needed," he said.

"It's a big resource that is underutilised that is separate to the killing of the pigs.

"Just think about what may be on people's laptops, or on their cameras or drones or thermal footage."



Acting vice president of the APDHA Ned Makim, Inverell, NSW, program Leader SSAA, Matthew Godson, Adelaide and Damien Ferguson, Brisbane from SSAA QLD.

Program Leader Matthew Godson from the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (SSAA) also spoke about using hunters in a proactive way.

"We are Australia's largest shooting organisation with around 440 clubs across Australia and over 215,000 financial members," he said.

"Our members have a strong attachment to the environment, which means they have a strong desire to protect that environment.

"We are a willing partner in conservation and pest management and we can use our skills to protect Australia's unique wildlife and agricultural assets."

SSAA are currently running two volunteer programs that farmers, government agencies, conservationists and land managers can access.

The conservation and wildlife management program (CWM) is a branch of SSAA members that are trained to undertake coordinated pest management. They work under a coordinator and with a pest management plan manager. So far CWM has worked on preservation projects in the Burdekin, Gladstone, Einasleigh and Calliope.

"CWM caters for larger landholdings that need integrated pest management strategies," Mr Godson said.

"CWM is set up to work with government agencies, in national parks and also with large conservation organisations."

Another program that SSAA runs is their Farmer Assistance Program where farmers are matched up with hunters who have the correct skills to tackle that farmer's individual problem.

"Our farmer assist program allows farmers to get in touch with individual members of SSAA to help with pest control," Mr Godson said.

"The farmer can go into our system and put up a job and then they get applications from our members through that system.

"It's a little bit like Farmer Wants a Wife, but more like Farmer Wants a Hunter."