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# The Economic Impact of Pests

## Economic Impact

In 2016, a report was published in Australia, that showed pests such as rabbits, foxes and feral cats do not just have an impact on biodiversity, they also have an economic impact (McLeod, 2016). This fact sheet presents some findings of that report.

Across a wide range of agricultural sectors, rabbits caused a loss of \$216.3 million in 2013/14. Foxes caused a loss of 28.4 million dollars. Feral cats were not included in the report, but the Pestsmart website estimates that the cost of cats is \$2 million per year for management and research, while the loss of birds to preying cats has been estimated to be \$144 million annually.

In the agricultural sector it has been found that grazing competition from rabbits causes a reduced carrying capacity of the land. This in turn results in:

- farms being unable to reach stock carrying capacity
- lower wool production per animal
- reduced lambing percentages

- poorer wool quality
- reduced sale weights
- higher stock mortality

The economic impact of fox predation on agriculture is not so clear. When lambing coincides with young foxes leaving the den across the landscape, there are higher losses. Using a figure of 3% predation rate of young sheep in high fox population areas, gives a national estimated cost of 28 million dollars due to foxes (\$18.05 million for wool production and \$10.34 million for meat production.)

This demonstrates that not only is it imperative to control feral animals for the impact they have on the biodiversity of Australia, but also to protect the agricultural industries' bottom line.

*Table 1 Losses to the agricultural sectors due to feral animals*

Industry	Average Cost Australia \$m
Wool production loss	94.45
Sheep meat production loss	50.46
Beef production loss	204.03
Broadacre cropping industries	6.6
Viticulture	68.57
<b>Total</b>	<b>424.1</b>

*Table 2 Cost of Vertebrate pests to Australia for management and research*

Vertebrate Pest Management	Average Cost Australia \$m
Broadacre and livestock farm control	46.13
Viticulture farm control	19.67
Commonwealth expenditure	14.74
State and Territory expenditure	69.58
<b>Total</b>	<b>150.11</b>

McLeod, R. (2016). Cost of Pest Animals in NSW and Australia, 2013-14. eSYS Development Pty Ltd, 2016. Report prepared for the NSW Natural Resources Commission.

[www.pestsmart.org.au/feral-cat/](http://www.pestsmart.org.au/feral-cat/)



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