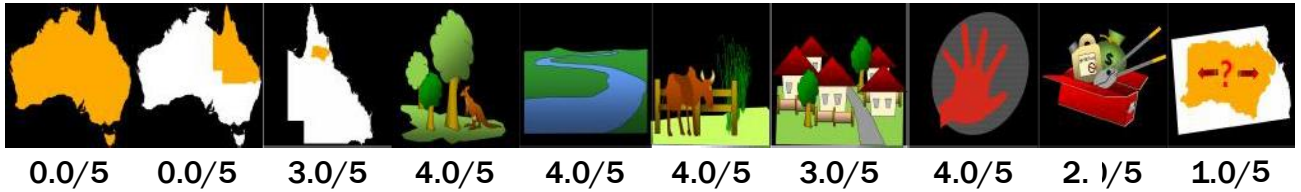


# Equus caballus (Feral horse)

Priority



Details

**Description:** Feral horses originate from domestic stock which have been released or escaped from use as work animals. They were first recognised as a pest in the 1860's and have gone on to number between 300,000 - 400,000 animals, mainly in the tropical north of WA, NT and QLD.

**Distribution:** Feral horses are widespread in the gulf plains and western Cape York Regions preferring the open grasslands and floodplains. Feral horses form social groups with a stallion and a small groups of mares and their offspring, or groups of bachelor stallions without mares. Feral horses are highly mobile and may cover up to 50km a day in search of feed and water. Home ranges can be broad and even with large parcel sizes across the Cape may include multiple properties.

**Impacts:** Feral horses cause erosion, damage to vegetation, and waterways. Waterholes, springs and wetlands can be severely damaged resulting in a decline of native species. In ideal conditions populations can increase by 20 percent per year. Feral horses damage fences and compete with stock for feed and water. Feral horses pose a serious safety threat to motorists.

Management requirements

**Asset protection**

Feral horses are widespread across Cape York Peninsula and their categorisation as a pest animal is dependent on context such as land tenure, land use and the cultural perceptions of landholders.

In general horse management programs are in place to protect areas of high environmental value, such as National Parks, and control measures are undertaken by landholders. In areas where horses are regarded as a pest animal management options include capture and removal, aerial culling and ground based shooting.

Should private landholders believe that feral horses are having a detrimental impact on the environmental character of their holding, or are responsible for economic losses to agricultural production, and the scale of the problem excludes ground based controls, assistance may be sought from regional organisations such as Landcare and Cape York NRM with access to funding streams aimed at pest animal management.

Control Calendar

breed	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	○
young	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●
trap	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
shoot	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
fence	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Biology		● Peak			● First/last flush			○ Occasional			⊗ n/a	
Control		● Optimal			● Good			○ Marginal			⊗ Not recommended	



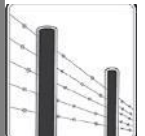
Vertebrate pest

herbivore

Category

- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

Control



## What is my biosecurity obligation?

**Asset protection zone**

As the feral horse is not a prohibited or restricted invasive animal under the Biosecurity Act 2014 there are currently no prescriptive management activities that landholders are obliged to take. Maintaining fencing will assist to reduce the movement of feral horses.

For more information on management aims in each zone refer to *Using the pest plan templates*