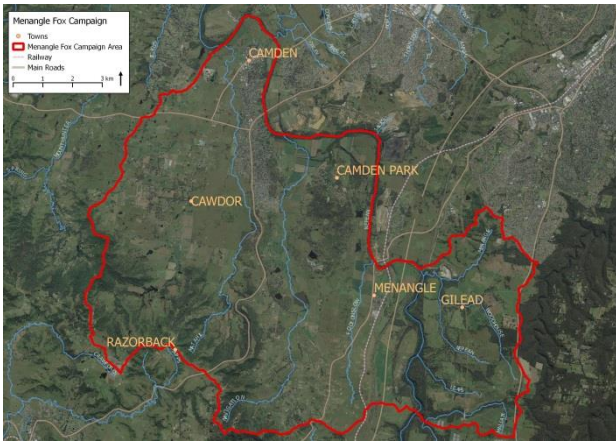# Menangle Fox Campaign

Managing foxes in south-west Sydney - Reducing impacts on livestock and native wildlife

Next coordinated control operation Spring 2016

The **Menangle Fox Control Group** (MFCG) has been formed to coordinate a landscape approach to managing foxes. The primary objective of the campaign is to protect both livestock and wildlife. The idea focuses on space and time, to get as many landholders (rural and residential) to use multiple management methods, operating twice a year (autumn and spring), leaving no gaps across the campaign area.

Menangle Fox Campaign area

Foxes will never be eradicated from the area as new foxes will move in from any uncontrolled surrounding (or within) areas. However, this ongoing approach aims to have the largest impact upon the fox population. Group members are encouraged to participate in the campaign by committing to the program for 5 years. This can involve baiting or using traps on your property to directly control foxes, or by following some simple tips (next page) to reduce fox problems. Community members can also be involved in the citizen science project associated with the campaign such as borrowing remote cameras to see what animals are in their backyard or paddock, tagging monitoring photos or listening to wildlife recordings from the area to monitor species at risk from foxes.

Tracks: looking out for signs, front paw prints (Triggs, 1996)

Fox   Dog

FeralScan (www.feralscan.org.au) is a website and a smart phone app that allows pest animal observations to be mapped, as well as damage such as sheep or

poultry attacks, caused by these pest animals to be recorded. More importantly to this campaign, control activities can also be mapped, helping the group to better plan and improve fox management (FoxScan) as well as the control of rabbits (RabbitScan). Campaign participants are asked to diligently use FeralScan to record all activities to enable reporting and continuous improvement of the campaign. Register online at FeralScan before using the website or FoxScan app.

In regards to **diseases**, *Neospora caninum* is a microscopic parasite which causes abortions in both dairy and beef cattle. Cattle (intermediate hosts) are infected by ingesting feral fox or dog faeces which are infected with *N. caninum* oocysts (eggs), through either water or feed sources or via contaminated soil. Adult cows which are infected with *N. caninum* show no clinical signs of illness. However infected pregnant cows can pass the infection onto the foetus via the placenta. Cows will either abort their foetus between 4 and 7 months pregnant or calves will be born clinically normal, but will have an 80-90% chance of being *N. caninum* carriers themselves.

Blood tests are now available to detect the *N. caninum* parasite. Producers within the Menangle area are currently conducting whole herd blood tests in order to calculate the percentage of their herd which is infected. *N. caninum*, Canine distemper and Hydatid disease are among a number of diseases which feral foxes are known to carry. Therefore, it is increasingly important that both the general public and livestock producers manage feral foxes on their property.

Many **resources** exist which help to easily access additional information on pest species and their management. **PestSmart Connect** (http://www.pestsmart.org.au/) is a web-based toolkit of information on best practice pest animal management in Australia.

NRM Notes is a newsletter designed to keep all Australian NRM regions up to date with the latest developments and current projects associated with invasive animal research.

The **Feral Flyer** is the fortnightly e-newsletter of the Invasive Animals CRC.

Greater Sydney Local Land Services will be running **1080/Pindone training** at **Richmond** on **19th July**, prior to the next control operation. This training will allow participants who are able to bait on their property the permit to do so. The cost is $50, however free for a small number of eligible landholders within the MFC area. Please register your interest at the website below.

Remote cameras are widely used to monitor animals including pest species such as foxes. As foxes are so elusive, people are often unaware that foxes visit their backyard. If you are interested in setting up a camera on your property, they can be borrowed from the MFCG. Register your interest at the website below.

Properties that are unable to use poison baits may consider trying a **Cage Trap** to catch foxes. Generally foxes are difficult to catch in cage traps, however with some effort trying different setups and lures, plus a lot of patience, you may have success. A small number of cage traps will be available for loan from the MFCG. Recently 4 foxes were trapped within a month in the Bankstown Council area. A remote camera setup at the trap will also help to see how a fox interacts with the trap. In order to borrow a trap, we can help you be

trained in its use, obtain a permit to transport the fox if necessary and organise a way of humanely euthanising and disposing of the carcass. Register your interest at the website below.

A **fox diet** study is underway to identify what foxes are eating across the landscape. If you are able to help by collecting scats or dead foxes (stomach contents) a Western Sydney University student is ready to start analysing. We can provide more information – a "fox scat collection kit" and a location to drop off dead foxes. Please register your interest below.

A fox scat can contain animal hair or bones, insects, plant material plus a range of other items including clothing! (Photo Triggs, 1996)

Simple tips to reduce fox problems

☐ Don't leave pet food outside overnight and never feed foxes
☐ Use enclosed compost bins
☐ Keep domestic animals secure at night
☐ Remove fallen fruit around fruit trees
☐ Keep garbage bins covered
☐ Block entry points to drains
☐ Close off access to underneath buildings
☐ Use fox-proof enclosures for poultry
☐ Turn-off outside lights that might attract insects
☐ Reduce weeds that provide food and shelter, such as african olive and blackberries
☐ Don't feed native wildlife as they will become more vulnerable to predators
☐ Record sightings in FoxScan.

If you would like to receive the Menangle Fox Campaign **newsletter** or are interested in any of the control or monitoring activities, please register your interest at: http://goo.gl/forms/ahkjaKsBwH or email menangle.fox@gmail.com

References
Triggs, B. (1996). Tracks, scats and other traces. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.