



Free, professional help for farmers on pest animal control

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Pest animals are a major problem to many farmers across South Australia. Feral pigs, goats, rabbits, foxes and wild dogs are some common species that have made the most of favourable climatic conditions in recent years.

Managing pest animals costs farmers' time, money and energy that can be better spent on other, more important things.



The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia has developed a unique program called SSAA Farmer Assist. It provides farmers with easy access to qualified shooters to help them with their wildlife management and pest control duties at no cost. By providing farmers with additional resources to tackle pest animals, SSAA wants its members to be part of the solution to on-farm pest problems.

The concept behind the program's development was simple. SSAA wanted to develop stronger ties between its members and the farming community so members with a certain skill set could provide help with pest animal management.

To achieve this, a special online platform was established to create a way for farmers to communicate with members using the internet. The online tool is an introductory service that provides farmers with access to SSAA members who are happy to volunteer their time to help deal with problem wildlife on rural properties.

Developed to be simple and easy to use, farmers only need to complete a quick and simple process to register, and then gain full access to the program's online 'Jobs Board'. The board enables a farmer to place a pest control task that explains the details of a specific pest animal problem and how they would like assistance. Only qualified SSAA members that are approved and registered can access to the board to see and respond to a listing.

The Jobs Board and its email reply system allows farmers to find, review and select SSAA members to assist with pest animal problems. We like to compare it to a dating service, where farmers have total control regarding who they communicate with and who they finally select to invite onto their property.

As part of the program, the SSAA has also developed material to help farmers coordinate activities on their properties. The Farmer Assist Booklet includes a template to assist in the creation of a Property Based Wildlife Management Plan. This is not a compulsory part of the program; it's merely another tool that adds value to the program and is available to farmers to utilise if they want to.

The plan provides a starting point to help farmers coordinate activities to improve the effectiveness of their pest control measures. This plan could be simply used to schedule shooting activities to occur before, during or after other control measures or leading up to a specific event (such as lambing season). The SSAA is committed to updating this document at regular intervals to ensure that it continues to be an important tool to help produce better outcomes for the farmer and members who take advantage of the program.

Current pest management attitudes indicate that control techniques should be used in a coordinated way. They should also be used in conjunction with other measures to achieve high effectiveness. The SSAA Farmer Assist program is designed to be complimentary to these attitudes, and the program provides tools to help farmers work towards achieving this at the property level.

If a group of farmers in a particular area teamed up and decided to use the program at the same time, they could coordinate wider reaching activities to achieve benefits greater than what could be achieved at the single property level. Benefits could extend to the local area level and beyond.

As a free, no-cost option, SSAA Farmer Assist is certainly a tool that farmers should consider including in their pest management toolbox.

Apart from access to and use of the unique online system, SSAA Farmer Assist offers other features for farmers' peace of mind. All SSAA members participating in the program are covered by the SSAA's national \$20 million public liability insurance policy, and members involved in the program have committed to conducting themselves in a manner with high regard to safety, animal welfare and ethical shooting practices.

- **Details:** To register for the SSAA Farmer Assist program, visit www.farmerassist.com.au or call Matthew Godson on 0448 887 079.