

Progress Report SP 2012-023

Feral cat control and numbat recovery in Dryandra Woodland and other sites

Animal Science

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Project Team

granted

Program Leader

granted

Directorate

granted

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A Friend

Context

Dryandra Woodland supports important populations of several threatened mammals, including the numbat, woylie and red-tailed phascogale, as well as significant populations of a number of threatened birds. Recent research has shown that feral cats are responsible for the majority of numbat and woylie deaths. This project investigates the feasibility and efficacy of using the *Eradicat* feral cat bait to reduce numbat and woylie mortality and promote their recovery at Dryandra.

Aims

- Determine the uptake of rhodamine-labelled non-toxic *Eradicat* baits by chuditch, red-tailed phascogales and mardos in Dryandra.
- Determine the survival or mortality of groups of radio-collared chuditch, red-tailed phascogales and mardos during a baiting campaign using toxic *Eradicat* baits in Dryandra.
- Determine the survival or mortality of feral cats through a baiting campaign using toxic *Eradicat* baits in Dryandra.

Progress

- A group of radio-collared numbats in Dryandra has been monitored under a regime of fox and cat control by baiting with both *Probait* and *Eradicat*. Forensic techniques have been applied to the remains and collars of dead numbats, including swabbing for predator DNA. During the year, six numbats were found dead. Causes of death included predation by carpet python (1), chuditch (3), raptor (1) and another indeterminate but probably raptor. There was no case of predation by fox or cat.
- A manuscript on red-tailed phascogales was submitted to *Wildlife Research*.

Management implications

- *Eradicat* baiting is effective in controlling cats and can be used with minimal non-target impact in the Dryandra Woodland. This is significant for the implementation of integrated fox and feral cat control programs at Dryandra and elsewhere in the south-west of Western Australia.

Future directions

- This project will be complete with publication of the manuscript on red-tailed phascogales.