



Feral Animal Trapping

Ethical Considerations of Trapping and Disposal

What Species Can Be Trapped?

In the Northern Territory feral species are declared through a gazette process, with Gazettes stored in the [NT Library](#). Species that are currently gazetted and of local relevance for control include (but is not limited to):

- Dog (*Canis familiaris*)
- Cat (*Felis catus*)
- Mouse (*Mus musculus*)
- Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)
- Spotted Turtle-dove (*Streptopelia chinensis*)
- Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

As such, these species are declared as feral and are therefore not protected under the NT Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act. This means that you do not require a permit to take or interfere with these species, unless such activities are being conducted within a Park or Reserve. In line with the declaration, members of the public are able to trap these species on their private property for feral animal control purposes.

Some General Considerations of Ethical Trapping

The [Animal Welfare Act](#) is legislation that protects animals, as they are entitled to a minimum level of care that provides for their welfare, health and safety. Animals that are being trapped need to be treated humanely and cruelty to the animals is to be prevented. Persons that are found guilty of an offence under the Animal Welfare Act can be fined or sentenced to imprisonment. As such, it is up to you as a trapper to make yourself aware of the Act and ensure that you are working within appropriate guidelines.

Traps should be placed in a safe location, as any trapped animals are vulnerable to exposure, thirst, starvation and shock. Shelter traps from extreme weather and provide a source of clean drinking water for potential catch. Avoid trapping in adverse weather conditions. Approach the trap with caution to ensure that you do not cause unnecessary stress to a trapped individual. If the target species is captured, ensure that the appropriate methods of disposal are available and conducted as quickly as possible to avoid prolonged stress to the trapped individual.

While you are in possession of an animal, you have a duty of care to that animal. Handling the animal or using the animal in a manner that is not appropriate, could put you in breach of your duty of care. If you intend to harm the animal, it could be considered cruelty, and therefore you will risk receiving heavy penalties for your actions. It's therefore important to trap feral animals in an ethical manner, mindful of your duty of care, at all times.

Native and Domestic Animal Bycatch

Many traps are not target specific and may trap other species. If you trap a native species by mistake, this is known as bycatch. Any bycatch should be released immediately, without causing stress or harm to the individual. Consider placing the trap in an area that is frequented by the target species to avoid bycatch. Select the appropriate trapping times that are relevant to the target species. For example, cats are trapped more effectively at night, and traps are more likely to collect bycatch during the day. Leave traps closed and secure when not in use, or if you are going to be unavailable to check the trap regularly.

If you trap a domestically owned animal, you can contact The Alice Springs Town Council Ranger Unit on (08) 8950 0500 from 8am and 5pm (Monday to Friday) to organise animal collection. Otherwise, trapped animals can be taken to the Alice Springs Animal Shelter on Len Kittle Drive and placed in the secure cages at the front of the facility.

Trapping as a Process

The Animal Welfare Act, which protects animals from harm, still applies to feral animals. Thus, any trapping or disposal methods used by persons conducting a trapping program must be approved under the Act. There may be some poisons and trap types that are not appropriate or legal for a given species. Likewise, not all methods of disposal are allowable in all locations. For example, firearms are permitted for dispatch of feral cats, but are not permitted within the municipality.

Note that using live animals as bait is not acceptable and is considered an offence under the Animal Welfare Act.

How Can Feral Species Be Dispatched?

Feral species can be dispatched through a set of [standard operating procedures](#), which vary from animal to animal. Euthanasia must be painless, avoid stress to the animal, and induce rapid loss of consciousness and death.

If someone is caught killing a domestically owned animal (a pet), or killing an animal inhumanely (*i.e.* drowning, car exhaust, *etc*) there could be legal repercussions from police, acting under the Animal Welfare Act.

Dog (Canis familiaris)

Because dogs may be owned pets, it's important to ensure that it isn't someone's property before euthanating it. Dogs can wander – the absence of a collar or microchip does not guarantee that it's unowned or feral.

We strongly recommend that all feral dogs are taken to the Alice Springs Animal Shelter. Feral dogs delivered to the Alice Springs Animal Shelter are kept for a period of time to ensure that they are not collected as domestically owned pets; and if unclaimed and unable to be rehomed, they are euthanized humanely. This is the most suitable option in the urban and peri-urban areas.

If delivery to the Alice Springs Animal Shelter is not a viable option due to a remote location and you are sure that the dog is feral, you can euthanize it via shooting with a licenced gun. This can only be conducted by aiming a shot to the centre of the head, midway between the level of the eyes and the base of the ears, slightly off to one side so as to miss the bony ridge down the middle of the skull. Alternatively, if shooting from the side, aim for the point midway between the eye and the base of the ear. Note that euthanasia via shooting is not approved in the municipality.

Cat (Felis catus)

Because cats may be owned pets, it's important to ensure that it isn't someone's property before euthanating it. Cats can wander – the absence of a collar or microchip does not guarantee that it's unowned or feral. Even domestic cats can show signs of distress when trapped, so ensure that behaviour is not the only guide.

We strongly recommend that all feral cats are taken to the Alice Springs Animal Shelter. Feral cats delivered to the Alice Springs Animal Shelter are kept for a period of time to ensure that they are not collected as domestically owned cats; and if unclaimed, they are euthanized humanely. This is the most suitable



option in the urban and peri-urban areas.

If delivery to the Alice Springs Animal Shelter is not a viable option due to a remote location and you are sure that the cat is feral, you can euthanize the cat via shooting with a licenced gun. This can only be conducted by aiming a shot to the centre of the head, slightly below a midway point between the ears, or alternatively behind the ear to the brain. Note that euthanasia via shooting is not approved in the municipality.

Mouse (Mus musculus)

Mice can be dispatched with cervical dislocation, which involves separating the brain from the spinal cord through pressure applied posterior to the base of the skull, inducing rapid loss of consciousness. If the mouse in question is highly active, it can be stunned first with a solid blow to the head.

Euthanasia with carbon dioxide gas (CO₂) is also an appropriate method as it involves minimal handling and multiple animals can be killed simultaneously. This should only be conducted in a well ventilated space with appropriate equipment.

Note that there are several native animals that resemble mice in central Australia. Ensure that you have the species identified correctly before any euthanasia methods are conducted.

Rabbit (Oryctolagus cuniculus)

The generally approved method of euthanasia for Rabbits includes stunning with a blow to the head followed by cervical dislocation (by trained personnel). Rabbits can be euthanized by shooting with a licenced gun to the centre of the head between the eyes, or between the eye and base of the ear if shooting from the side.

Rabbits can be poisoned with oats dosed with Pindone, a blood anti-coagulant, causing rabbits to simply run out of energy. It needs to be used with caution and takes quite a large quantity (animals can recover fully from a sub-lethal dose).

Fumigation of rabbit warrens is suitable for controlling rabbits during winter, when there is plenty of food around for rabbits and the warrens are active (potentially with young). Fumigation tablets are used to fill the warren with gas that is heavier than air. As such, all burrow entrances must be closed to prevent the escape of rabbits and retreat any new warren openings found. Fumigation tablets react with water in the soil or atmosphere to produce a gas, which then diffuses through the warren.

Spotted Turtle-dove (Streptopelia chinensis)

We strongly recommend that all feral Turtle-doves are taken to the Alice Springs Desert Park feral bird control enclosure for disposal, located on the service / workshop road to the left on the main entrance road. Turtle-doves delivered to the Desert Park are euthanized humanely and fed to captive animals. The Desert Park will not accept dead birds for animal feed as it is a quarantine risk.

Spotted Turtle-doves can be dispatched with cervical dislocation, which involves separating the brain from the spinal cord through pressure applied posterior to the base of the skull, inducing rapid loss of consciousness.

Euthanasia with carbon dioxide gas (CO₂) is also an appropriate method as it involves minimal handling and multiple animals can be killed simultaneously. This should only be conducted in a well ventilated space with appropriate equipment.

Note that there are several native birds that resemble Spotted Turtle-doves in central Australia. Ensure that you have the species identified correctly before any euthanasia methods are conducted.



Fox (Vulpes vulpes)

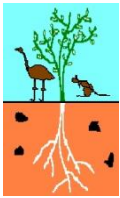
Foxes can euthanize it via shooting with a licenced gun. This can only be conducted by aiming a shot to the centre of the head, midway between the level of the eyes and the base of the ears, slightly off to one side so as to miss the bony ridge down the middle of the skull. Alternatively, if shooting from the side, aim for the point midway between the eye and the base of the ear. Note that euthanasia via shooting is not approved in the municipality.

More Information

For more information on ethical euthanasia of feral animals, please consult the [PestSmart Methods of Euthanasia](#) document. Note that the legislation around trapping of pest species and euthanasia of animals may change and it is up to the person conducting the trapping to check the latest guidelines.

If you have any concerns regarding the welfare of an animal under your care or someone else's you can contact an Animal Welfare Officer at the Parks and Wildlife Commission NT (Ph (08) 8951 8250).

For more information on animal management in the Alice Springs area, visit the [Alice Springs Town Council](#) website.



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