

Pig Population

Six months have elapsed since the Forest Bridge Trust hosted a pig population meeting in the Puhoi Centennial Hall on Sunday 5 August 2019.

As a result of that community meeting, a Pig Population Working Group was formed with representatives from Department of Conservation, QEII National Trust, Police and local community.

Since the initial community meeting this group has convened on four occasions being,

- 13 August 2019
- 5 September 2019
- 3 October 2019
- 14 November 2019

Aside from other achievements an aim was established that reads:

*“To establish within the defined Ahuroa/Puhoi area (see map) a co-ordinated management programme for controlling and recording the feral pig population. The objective to be reducing the feral pig population to an agreed level with each landowner.
Reduce to a level that protects animal/human and environmental health and wellbeing.”*

The next meeting of the Pig Population Working Group is proposed for 20 February 2020 and after that meeting, we shall report back on the “pod trial” and other general information that arises from that meeting.

The group has prepared a detailed land ownership map of the local area extending from Waiwera in the south, Redwoods in the north, Wech Access Road in the west, and State Highway 1 in the east. The pig population management area covers around 13,500 hectares (35,000 acres).

The predominance of the 13,500 hectare land area is owned by large block holders, private farms and forestry. These activities have well managed pest control programmes in place.

The pig population problem appears to have gained momentum from:

- displacement of pigs from the new motorway alignment
- greater awareness from the increase in rural resident numbers
- unmanaged covenanted rural/residential bush blocks providing havens for pigs
- release of pigs into the local area

The covenanted bush associated with the increase in rural lifestyle property numbers allows the pig population to both travel, habitat and breed in covenanted areas that are rarely visited or controlled.

Although the covenanted bush blocks are supposed to be controlled by pest control covenants, little is done to comply with, monitor or enforce the covenants.

Given the increase in rural lifestyle blocks numbers, resident population numbers have similarly grown making pig sightings more widely reported. This does not mean that the pig population numbers have increased, it is more likely pig numbers from a certain area have been displaced.

Department of Conservation has noticed an increase in pig numbers in small reserves, however the majority of the land ownership area do not believe that there has been an increase in pig numbers, and that they are adequately controlling the pests.

We have established that any local recent increase in pig rooting or sightings is most likely the result of the habitat loss of the motorway corridor.

Recent reporting, sightings or land disturbances by pigs have been infrequent, however the hot weather would have driven the pigs further back into the bush.

If any residents have any queries, contributions or wish report any pig sightings or occurrences, please email pig@hc.co.nz and this information can be included with the community update after our February meeting.

Ian Hutchinson
Spokesperson for the Pig Population Working Group