



Middle School 



Feral Animals!



A feral animal is one that was previously domesticated but has returned to a wild state. Introduced animals can cause problems for native wildlife in four different ways – competition (using the same food, habitat etc), predation (eating wildlife), land degradation (causing damage to habitat) and disease. Check out Australia Zoo’s feral animals’ enclosures to answer these questions.

Read this example of a well known introduced animal.

European Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)

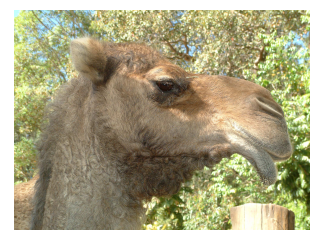
Competition	<i>The rabbit has been implicated in the decreasing populations of small herbivorous mammals including bandicoots, bettongs, hare wallabies and bilbies due to competition for food.</i>
Predation	<i>The rabbit itself doesn't prey on any native animals, but as a prey item they support fox populations, which also prey on native wildlife.</i>
Land Degradation	<i>Rabbits graze down to ground level (they eat the whole plant, including roots), exposing topsoil and promoting erosion. They will eat bark, this ringbarks trees and kills the tree. They eat seedlings, preventing regeneration of vegetation. Warrens also lead to erosion.</i>
Disease	<i>No significant threats.</i>

1. How was the Rabbit introduced to Australia? *Europeans brought them over with the First Fleet.*
2. Why was it introduced? *The rabbit was introduced as a food source and for hunting.*
3. What attempts have been made to control it? *Rabbits have been culled and viruses such as Myxoma and the Rabbit Calici Virus have been released in the hope of reducing population numbers.*

Using the signage at enclosures 35, 36 and 37 on the Zoo map, answer the same questions about the introduced species at Australia Zoo. You will also find it useful to attend the Feral Fox and CamelsLIVE show at 12:30pm, otherwise you can do further research at the library or on the internet.

Dromedary Camel (*Camelus dromedarius*)

Competition	
Predation	
Land Degradation	
Disease	



1. How was the Camel introduced to Australia? _____
2. Why was it introduced? _____
3. What attempts have been made to control it? _____

Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

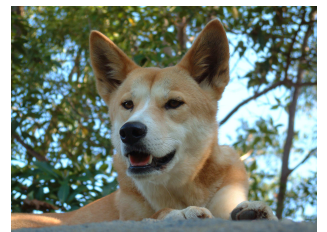
Competition	
Predation	
Land Degradation	
Disease	



4. How was the Red Fox introduced to Australia? _____
5. Why was it introduced? _____
6. What attempts have been made to control it? _____

Dingo (*Canis lupus dingo*)

Competition	
Predation	
Land Degradation	
Disease	



7. How was the Dingo introduced to Australia? _____
8. Why was it introduced? _____
9. What attempts have been made to control it? _____
10. When you get back to school research the same information about:
 - a) The Cane Toad AND
 - b) An introduced species of your choice (eg. horse, cat, goat, pig, deer, buffalo)
11. As a general rule of thumb, only one in ten animals that are introduced to a new ecosystem are able to survive, and only one in ten of those become a problem.
 Based on this, what percentage of introduced species become a problem? _____
 If the percentage is so low why are we so cautious when it comes to quarantine laws and preventing the introduction of new species? _____

