

Is 'pig dogging' legal in NSW and the ACT?

This fact sheet is for general information purposes and is not legal advice. It provides a brief overview only of this area of the law. If you require legal advice relating to your particular circumstances you should contact the ADO or your solicitor.

What is 'pig dogging'?

Pig dogging is when a person hunts wild pigs using a pack of 'pig dogs' (large, powerful dogs). The dogs are used to track and corner the pig. The person then either shoots the pig or stabs the animal in the heart with a knife. Dogs are used to hold (or 'lug') the pig by the ears while the pig is being stabbed.



What are the animal welfare issues for the pigs?

Being hunted by dogs is a terrifying experience for any animal. Undoubtedly the pigs will experience fear, panic and distress. They are chased until exhausted or until cornered by a pack of dogs before being killed.

A pig may be mauled to death if not found quickly by the human hunter, whose goal is usually to stab the pig through the heart or to shoot the pig at close range.¹ Death by stabbing to the heart is a slower and more painful death than being shot. There are videos and photos on the internet and in pig hunting magazines that reveal the cruelty of pig hunting, including pigs being mauled.

However, pigs are not always killed. They may instead be mutilated by hunters (removal of tusks, testicles, tails or ears) before being released to increase the challenge for their dogs and add to the 'sport' next time.²

What are the animal welfare issues for the dogs?

During hunting dogs may suffer from heat stress and dehydration in addition to the risk of serious, sometimes fatal injuries.³ Although often wearing protective collars and chest plates, dogs can still be wounded, especially when holding the pig while the human hunter prepares to kill the pig with a knife. Veterinarians have reported treating extensive injuries to pig dogs, but it is thought that many injured dogs do not receive any veterinary treatment at all.⁴

Is it legal to use dogs for pig hunting in NSW?

Yes. Using dogs to hunt pigs is legal in NSW on both public and private land.

'Pig dogging' on public land in NSW—specific limitations

Some specific limitations apply if the dogs are being used to hunt pigs on public land.

Dogs must not be used for hunting pigs on public land in NSW except for locating, holding (lugging) or bailing pigs.⁵ Dogs cannot be used to bring the pigs down. When the pig has been 'bailed up' (the pig remains stationary facing the dog), hunters are allowed to move in and kill the pig.

Hunters must hold a valid licence if they are hunting pigs on public land⁶ and carry the licence at all times while hunting.

¹ Animals Australia "Stop pig dogging" found at http://www.animalsaustralia.org/take_action/stop-pig-dogging/

² RSPCA "What happens when dogs are used to hunt feral pigs" found at http://kb.rspca.org.au/What-happens-when-dogs-are-used-to-hunt-feral-pigs_543.html

³ RSPCA "How are dogs used for hunting" found at http://kb.rspca.org.au/How-are-dogs-used-for-hunting_542.html

⁴ As above, footnote 2.

⁵ Clause 13 in Schedule 1 to the *Game and Feral Animal Control Regulation 2012* (NSW).

⁶ Section 16 of the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002*.

The hunter must comply with licence conditions set out in the *Game and Feral Animal Control Regulation 2012* (NSW). For example, a single licence holder must not use more than 3 dogs for locating, holding or bailing pigs on public land, while a group of licence holders may use up to 5 dogs.⁷ The dogs must be microchipped, and be wearing a collar which clearly shows the name, address and telephone number of the keeper. The dogs also must be wearing a radio tracking collar or be on a lead.⁸ The person using the dogs must ensure the dogs do not chase any other species of animal.⁹

There is a Code of Practice for licensed hunters.¹⁰ Penalties may apply for non-compliance with the Code of Practice (up to \$5,500).¹¹

'Pig dogging' on private land in NSW—general limitations

Using dogs to hunt pigs on private land appears to be subject only to general limitations eg hunters must not trespass, or commit an offence under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* (in relation to pigs or dogs).

A licence is **not** required if the pigs are hunted on private land.¹²

Is it legal to use dogs for pig hunting in the ACT?

The situation is less clear in the ACT. Under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* a licence is required to kill native animals¹³, but not introduced animals such as pigs.

While a licence may not be required to hunt pigs, it appears to be current ACT Government policy that hunting is not permitted on public land.

There do not appear to be any specific restrictions on hunting non-native animals on private property, other than that the hunter must have the occupier's permission (to avoid trespassing), and the hunter must not commit an offence under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* (eg a person must not cause an animal 'unnecessary' pain¹⁴).

Conclusion

Pig hunting with dogs is legal in both NSW and the ACT. There are currently few restrictions on using dogs to hunt pigs on private land. In NSW there are some constraints when hunting on public land, including the number of dogs that can be set onto one pig and what the dogs can and can't do with the pig. It is difficult, however, to see how these restrictions could be enforced during a hunt.

In both NSW and ACT hunters are required to abide by the general animal welfare legislation and not cause 'unnecessary' pain to either pig or dog.



DISCLAIMER

While all care has been taken in preparing the information on this fact sheet, it is not a substitute for legal advice. For any specific questions we recommend you seek legal advice. The Animal Defenders Office accepts no responsibility for any loss or damage suffered by people relying on the information on this fact sheet.

⁷ Clause 13 in Schedule 1 to the *Game and Feral Animal Control Regulation 2012* (NSW).

⁸ Clause 13(d) in Schedule 1 to the *Game and Feral Animal Control Regulation 2012* (NSW).

⁹ Clause 13(e) in Schedule 1 to the *Game and Feral Animal Control Regulation 2012* (NSW).

¹⁰ Available on the NSW DPI website: <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/hunting/regulations/code-of-practice>

¹¹ Sections 23 and 24 of the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002*.

¹² Section 17 of the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002*.

¹³ Sections 130 and 153(2)(b)(i) of the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*.

¹⁴ Section 8 of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*.