

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS OF ISLAND RESTORATION

FERAL ANIMAL REMOVAL

When visited by Dirk Hartog in 1616, Dirk Hartog Island was pristine. It was only with the later arrival of Europeans that feral cats, goats and sheep were introduced. Goats and sheep grazed the trees and shrubs removing shelter and feral cats hunted and killed wildlife. Many native animals died out on the island as a result. The Dirk Hartog Island Ecological Restoration Project – *Return to 1616* is helping to turn back the hands of time and return the island to its original state.



Destocking– a herculean effort

Sheep were rounded up and removed over 9 years. Feral goats proved more difficult because as their numbers decreased, they became harder to find. The 'Judas' goat method was employed whereby radio collars were fitted to selected female goats allowing them to be tracked and located by helicopter. Being social creatures, they soon teamed up with other goats revealing their location so they could be removed. The island has been free from sheep and goats since 2017 with over 5000 sheep and 10,000 goats removed.



DBCA staff Rowan Dawson and Shane Heriot fitting a radio collar to a 'Judas' goat.



Feral cats hunted and killed wildlife on the island.



Photo – Ray Smith

Feral cats are skilled and efficient hunters.

EradiCATing Feral Cats

Dirk Hartog Island National Park is enormous (63,000 ha) making the task of removing feral cats extremely difficult. After initial research, specially designed poison baits were laid out over the entire island and a mixture of automated cameras, sand pads (that show footprints), traps and specially trained dogs were used to check for any remaining feral cats.

The island is now the largest in the world to be made free of feral cats, after a four year baiting program and is safe for native animal reintroductions.



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



DIRK HARTOG ISLAND
RETURN TO 1616

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Scan this QR code to find out more about the Dirk Hartog Island National Park Ecological Restoration Project – *Return to 1616*.