Frequently Asked Questions:

Pest Management Courses,
University of Canberra

Q. Why is the University of Canberra involved in pest animal and weed management?

A. Pests (whether plants or animals) can cause extensive damage to Australia’s production and conservation values. While it is important to be vigilant and do all that is practicable to prevent new pests, and should they get in to quickly detect and eradicate or contain them, we now know that once they are established, rarely can we eradicate each and every individual. Consequently for most pests, the aim is to reduce the damage that they cause to an acceptable level. This damage maybe social, economic and/or environmental.

In 2007, the Commonwealth released the Australian Pest Animal Strategy (APAS) which outlined the principles and strategies for managing pests – Best Practice. Few courses have embraced the Best Practice approach. Indeed, there has been a steady decline throughout Australia of courses aimed at giving the necessary skills and understanding about how best to manage pests. The courses developed by the University of Canberra aim to help redress this deficiency as well as embracing the changing landscape in the pest management field, including:

- The recent release of APAS;
- Limited succession planning with the aging of experienced pest operators;
- The increasing role of the 56 Natural Resource Management Boards in pest management – many with staff with little or no experience in pest management; and
- The increasing trend to outsource on-ground management to the private sector.

The University of Canberra is fortunate to have national experts in the pest management field to develop and teach courses in invasive species management.

Q. What is ‘Best Practice’ management of pests?

A. Effective management of pests (plants or animals) requires a strategic approach that focuses on the desired outcome from management (e.g. higher productivity, recovery of native wildlife and communities, etc), not just killing pests. Those planning and undertaking pest management need appropriate training to understand and to be able to apply the strategic approach to managing pests. The University of Canberra has
identified this need and has developed a suite of courses to train people with responsibility for or interest in best practice management of pests.

Q. What are the courses offered?
A. The following courses dealing on pest management are delivered through the University of Canberra’s Faculty of Applied Science (UC):
   - a Vocational Education and Training (VET) Diploma in Conservation and Land Management (Specialising in Pest Management)—this is a nationally accredited course conducted through the University of Canberra College (UCC); and
   - tailored short courses specifically designed for agencies responsible for pest plant and animal management, incorporating, where required, certificates of attendance.

Q. What is in the courses for me?
A. Both the VET Diploma and the short courses are designed to provide you with the knowledge of the principles and approaches required to successfully undertake best practice management of pests. A tiered approach has been adopted to enable you to work through the various approaches to management from a basic understanding through to the development and application of sophisticated, coordinated and complex multi-disciplinary management plans.

Q. I work in the field in managing/controlling pest species. Is there anything in the VET Diploma course for me?
A. While the course aims to give you the understanding, skills and knowledge to develop, implement and manage invasive species management programs, in reality it gives you more generic skills that enable you to define a management issue for any natural resource based system and to then plan and implement an effective management program. It could be for a production system or how to manage for the conservation of native wildlife. It does not attempt to teach you how to undertake any specific management actions (e.g., how to mix poisons?) but it does enable you to decide whether a particular management measure is likely to achieve the desired management outcome.

A similar approach is normally adopted for the short courses although there is more flexibility in what each course includes.
Q. **What job prospects are there? and Where can this lead me?**
A. The question of job prospects is the perennial question. However the issue of pest management is a significant and topical issue and the VET Diploma is gaining recognition as a well-respected training qualification. Areas where employment may be found include any one of the 56 Natural Resource Management Boards across Australia, Local Government, National Park Agencies, State Forests, State or Territory pest management agencies or private pest management companies. The latter is a growing field as States more and more are outsourcing pest management to the private sector.

Q. **Can the VET Diploma Course be undertaken part time?**
A. Yes, the VET Diploma in Conservation and Land Management (Specialising in Pest Management) can be done on either a full or part time basis.

Q. **What are the entry requirements for the VET Diploma Course?**
A. There are no formal educational prerequisites for entry into the VET Diploma course. It is expected that each applicant would have basic reading and writing competencies and the skills necessary to undertake the on-line course work. You are advised to discuss the course and the necessary skills with the lecturers before you decide on whether it is the correct course for you.

Q. **How long is the VET Diploma? And How much does it cost?**
A. The Vocational Education and Training (VET) Diploma in Conservation and Land Management (Specialising in Pest Management) takes 12 months and costs A$3,500.

Q. **What payment options are available?**
A. The UCC has a payment plan option that allows for staged payments during the duration of the course which normally includes an up-front payment.

Q. **Are there any other additional costs?**
A. There are costs associated with attendance at the residential (i.e. travel and accommodation, particularly if coming from interstate). Lunches and refreshments are provided along with a course dinner.
Q. **Are there any ways to offset the costs?**
A. Unfortunately VET FEE Help is not available for this course. Some students have obtained financial support from their employers through subsidizing the course fees, travel and accommodation expenses and by claiming the rest as a tax deduction for work based education.

Q. **Who teaches the Courses?**
A. Key lecturers are Professor Mike Braysher, Professorial Fellow, Natural Resource Management, Institute for Applied Ecology, and Dr Tony Buckmaster, Faculty of Applied Science. Both are based at the University of Canberra.

Q. **What are the backgrounds of the lecturers?**
A. **Mike Braysher**, Professorial Fellow in Natural Resource Management, University of Canberra

Mike has extensive experience in the pest management field encompassing the areas of research, on-ground management, policy development, strategic planning and high level training. He was a member of the National Vertebrate Pests Committee for 17 years. Some highlights of his career include:

- Lectured for three years in ecology and animal physiology at the Adelaide College of Advanced Education;
- In 1974 appointed to head the Wildlife Unit of the Australian Capital Territory Parks and Conservation Service;
- In 1991, Mike joined Bureau of Resource Sciences in the Commonwealth Department of Primary Industries and Energy to review past pest management and to establish and manage the National Vertebrate Pest Program;
  - Under this program he produced the Bureau of Rural Sciences series on Managing Vertebrate Pest Principles and Strategies, Rabbits, Feral Horses, Feral Pigs, Feral goats etc. and provided the scientific input into the seminal pest book ‘Australia’s Pest Animals. New Solutions to old problems’ Kangaroo Press, July 1998;
- In 1999, appointed Adjunct Professor in Natural Resource Management, University of Canberra where he worked with community groups and government agencies to develop and implement large scale pest management programs based on current Best practice.
  - As a result of his experience he, along with Dr Glen Saunders published PESTPLAN, A guide to setting priorities and developing a management plan for pest animals.’ Natural Heritage Trust, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
• In 2006 developed and now delivers the on-line Vocational Education and Training Diploma in Conservation and Land Management (Specialising in Pest Management);

• Organised and/or presented at courses on:
  o strategic management of pest animal damage to NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service;
  o managing rabbit damage in the Sydney Basin for the Moss Vale Rural Lands Protection Board;
  o strategic management of pest animal damage for south-west NSW;
  o strategic planning and management of pest animal damage to biodiversity in Kangaroo Valley to the NSW NPWS;
  o biosecurity to officers from Agriculture and Food, WA.

• Authored papers/reports on:
  o setting priorities for managing pest animals and weeds in the Western CMA, NSW;
  o the 2001 and 2011 ACT Pest Animal Strategies;
  o the national Threat Abatement Plan for managing the damage due to feral pigs;
  o the economic impact of Australia’s pests;
  o several carp management plans to supplement plans to restore the health of large sections of rivers in the Murray Darling Basin;
  o various aspects of pest management both at national and international conferences.

A. Dr Anthony Buckmaster, Lecturer at the Faculty of Applied Science, University of Canberra

Tony is an experienced lecturer in the field of pest management with research experience in the management of feral cats. Key qualifications include:

• In 2008 commenced as convenor and primary lecturer for the Vertebrate Pest Management Unit which is part of the Wildlife Health and Population Management Masters course run through the University of Sydney.

• In 2009 commenced teaching into the VET Diploma in Conservation and Land Management (Specialising in Vertebrate Pest Management).

• 2010 commenced as an associate lecturer at the University of Canberra designing graduate level courses on strategic vertebrate pest management.

• Organised and/or presented courses on:
  o Feral cat management techniques for NPWS at Perisher Valley
  o Pest management particularly cats and birds at the Biosecurity Queensland Local Government workshop
  o Biosecurity to officers from Agriculture and Foods, WA; and
  o Presented guest lectures at a number of universities on vertebrate pest management.

• Presented papers at national and international conferences on strategic pest management training.
In 2012, Tony was awarded his PhD following acceptance of his doctoral study on the behaviour and movement of feral cats.

Q. **Who can I contact to discuss the courses and my options?**
A. Professor Mike Braysher, can be contacted at the University of Canberra on (02) 6206 3847 or by email at: Mike.Braysher@canberra.edu.au.

Dr Tony Buckmaster, can be contacted at the University of Canberra on (02) 6201 5008 or by email at: Anthony.Buckmaster@canberra.edu.au.

Q. **Who can I contact to discuss enrolment? and How do I go about enrolling in the VET Diploma?**
A. Mr David Walter, can be contacted at the University of Canberra on (02) 6201 5728 or by email at: David.Walter@canberra.edu.au, to initiate the process of enrolling in any of the courses.

If you decide to enrol he will link you with the University of Canberra College (UCC) who are responsible for processing applications, fees and other enrolment matters. This is a fairly straightforward procedure.

Q. **Can I do the VET Diploma course remotely?**
A. Yes, the VET Diploma has been developed to be delivered mainly on-line (approx 85% on line) through the UC’s website and the open source software Moodle, used by the University. This approach enables the study program to be undertaken by you, whether you are based at home or internationally.

Q. **What are the key features that I should note if I am considering the VET Diploma?**
A. There are several notable features.

- The course has been developed to be delivered mainly on-line (approx 85% on line) through the UC’s website and the open source software Moodle, used by the University. This approach enables the study program to be undertaken by remote domestic students or international students studying and completing the course in their home countries.

- In the course there is a face-to-face component usually in the form of residential.
The course is delivered using inquiry-based learning where ever possible and utilises proven scenario based software.

The course involves discussion and analysis of real life case studies.

The course requires the preparation of a project plan which is relevant to the student, ideally covering a natural resource and/or pest management issue that they are currently dealing with or are particularly interested in.

Q. **What sort of project is expected of me in the courses?**

A. Examples of Projects developed by past VET Diploma of Conservation and Land Management (Specialising in Pest Management) students are as follows;

- Management of feral pig damage to crops in the Eulah Creek catchment near Namo, NSW.
- Development of a plan to manage the damage due to feral deer in the Kennith-Stirling National Park, Adelaide Hills.
- A Feral deer Management Plan for the Northern & Yorke Natural Resources Management Board.
- Strategic management of the damage that feral pigs cause in the areas surrounding Mt Kaputar National Park, northern NSW.
- Management of feral goats in remnant vegetation in the area north of the ACT – Murrumbateman to Collector.
- An experimental program to determine the factors affecting the successful establishment Greater Bilbies in unfenced areas in northern South Australia.
- An education strategy for local government and their communities on how to manage and live with urban foxes in Perth and Fremantle.
- A cooperative wild dog management program for the southern ACT and associated grazing lands of NSW.
- Managing incursions of Weeds Of National Significance within the jurisdiction of the Queensland Murray Darling Committee (NRM).
- Planning and implementing the release of biological agents to manage Patterson’s curse in the cropping lands south west of Perth.
- Eradication of feral goats, feral deer and feral pigs from Kangaroo Island, South Australia.
- Managing the detrimental impact of a silver gull colony to human safety and operations of Tasports facility in the Derwent, Tasmania.
- Development of a position statement on the need for and management options for addressing the impact of feral honey bees in Victorian National Parks.

A key objective of the project is the development of a project that the student will use either within their current duties or one that addresses an issue of particular interest.
Q. **What are the short courses about?**

A. The short courses draw upon the principles and approaches covered in the VET Diploma, but are tailored to the requirements (such as location, number of participants, duration, content, delivery style and specific case studies) of the agency funding/supporting the training. A feature of the short courses is that they can be pitched at various levels to suit the client. These could be from senior management through to operational level staff/individuals responsible for planning and implementation of pest management. Course delivery can range from information sharing sessions through to requiring successful completion of exercises by participants.

Q. **How much are short courses?**

A. There is no set price for each short course as there are a number of variables that need to be considered, such as the number of attendees, the duration the course, location/venue costs, the course material preparation etc.

To find out more about the costs for a tailored short course please contact Professor Mike Braysher who can be contacted at the University of Canberra on (02) 6206 3847 or by email at: Mike.Braysher@canberra.edu.au, or Dr Tony Buckmaster, who can be contacted at the University of Canberra on (02) 6201 5008 or by email at: Anthony.Buckmaster@canberra.edu.au.

Q. **What is the value of a short course?**

A. The value in a short course is varied. Each course can be tailored to address the specific pest or pests that are causing management concerns, whether they are pest animals or plants. The course can designed include case studies and references specific to the species of concern or the management problems encountered. The pitch of each course can be set to suit the audience/attendees. As well as the tailoring of the content to match the objectives of management the logistics of the course can be made to match the needs of the organiser, with regards to aspects such as venue, location duration of the course, etc.

Q. **Have any short courses been held? and Has there been any feedback?**

A. Several short courses have already been delivered by Mike and Tony, dealing with a range of pest management issues, both plant and animal. The feedback that has been received has been very positive noting that the topics covered are very relevant to the management problems encountered. Mike can be contacted to provide details of course organisers who can be contacted to provide independent feedback and comment.