



POPULATION DYNAMICS OF FERAL HORSES IN AUSTRALIA

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Australia has the largest population of feral horses (*Equus ferus caballus*) in the world, with some one million feral horses occupying the diverse and often remote Australian environments. Despite numerous concerns raised by government agencies, private landholders, and the general public on feral horse presence in the Australian ecosystems, there is lack of collective solutions on the management of this overabundant species.

In this talk I focus on two studies from my PhD research that relate to measurement of the main vital parameters of the population of feral horses, which occupies a unique coniferous environment in Australia. I will first discuss a method for measuring reproduction and survivorship of the population. I show that estimation of these parameters could be used for modelling the annual population growth rate, which in turn could be used for long-term



population management. I will then screen a documentary, which depicts for the first time the social organisation of feral horses in Australia in an attempt to understand the biology of the species and their relationship with the environment. With this work I demonstrate the value of understanding the ecology of feral animals and encourage future managers and government organisations to cooperate in the formulation of the appropriate feral horse management programs in Australia and elsewhere.

Magdalena Zabek began her research work in 2011 at the University of Queensland. Her research focus is on how environmental conditions influence population dynamics of wild and feral animals, and what this implies for conservation and/or management planning. As a photographer and film maker, her passion revolves around capturing social interactions and behaviour of studied animal species.