



Pig disease risk

Hunters hired to trap backyard ferals

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PLAGUES of wild pigs invading suburban back yards across the state's far north are putting residents at serious risk of potentially deadly diseases.

The problem has become so severe, residents bordering Wet Tropics Rainforest in the Tully/Mission Beach area have contracted professional hunters to trap the feral animals.

The destructive creatures not only cause widespread environmental damage but put people who come into contact with their urine and feces at risk of infection from diseases.

"I normally wouldn't be down

here without covered shoes on," said Jeff Ford as he surveyed another night's damage at his neatly-manicured yard at Mission Beach, 140km south of Cairns, last week.

Mr Ford's property is on the fringe of Wet Tropics World Heritage rainforest, where wild pig populations have spread rampantly in recent years and continue to cause millions of dollars worth of damage to farms.

Mr Ford has been able to access the services of professional trappers under an eradication program funded by the Australian Rainforest Foundation.

Under the program, pig control company Boar Busters is helping

rid homes and farms of the disease-carrying pests.

"I actually had a caretaker here who walked off the veranda one night and (one almost) barrelled him over, this pig just came out of the bushes and charged straight at him," Mr Ford said.

Environment Minister Lindy Nelson-Carr told *The Sunday Mail* \$150,000 would be spent over the next two years on a State Government program to help eradicate feral pigs from private properties neighbouring Wet Tropics World Heritage areas.

The program will complement a \$500,000 trial already under way in the Tully-Mission Beach region.