

Chalmers' Dramas with Feral Animals

Securing
Our Region



James Bradford, Thomas Nevinson,
Harry Sides and Charlie Waters

St Michael's Parish Primary School, Deniliquin



Creative Catchment Kids

Creative Catchment Kids is an initiative of Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between our funding partners and school students by providing opportunities for positive and authentic ventures that encourage students to develop creative solutions to agriculture and natural resource management issues.

www.wirraminna.org/creative-catchment-kids/

Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre

The Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre is located in Burrumbuttock, north of Albury in southern NSW. Since 1995, the centre, which is adjacent to Burrumbuttock Public School, has provided opportunities for discovery and learning about the natural environment, the ecology of the local woodlands and the beauty of native plants.

www.wirraminna.org

Enviro-Stories

Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by Peekdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area.

www.envirostories.com.au

Chalmers' Dramas with Feral Animals

Authors: James Bradford, Thomas Nevinson,
Harry Sides and Charlie Waters

Teacher: Marg Wettenhall

School: St Michael's Parish Primary School, Deniliquin

WARNING: This book contains images that may be distressing to some readers. Please be aware that images of dead animals shown in this book have been killed under humane conditions.

Local Land Heroes - Securing Our Region

In 2015, students involved in the Creative Catchment Kids program researched and wrote stories about their 'Local Land Heroes' who are involved in pest management in the Murray and Murrumbidgee regions. These heroes are local individuals, couples, a business or industries that have made a difference in their local community by contributing to the management of pest animals and plants. The program was generously funded by Murray Local Land Services and Riverina Local Land Services.

Local Land Heroes is part of Enviro-Stories, a PeekKdesigns education program.



Local Land
Services



Rod Chalmers was born in Kerang in Victoria, and grew up on a farm 20 kilometres south of Kerang.

He is married to Linda and has 5 children. He has lived on 'Riversleigh' near Wakool for 40 years.

Mr. Chalmers controls pest species on his farm because they cost him money.

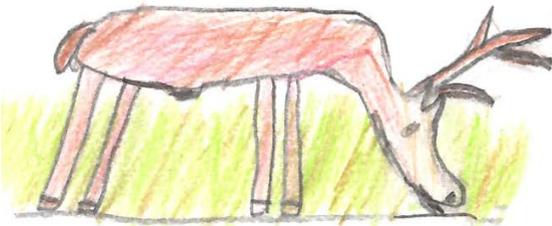
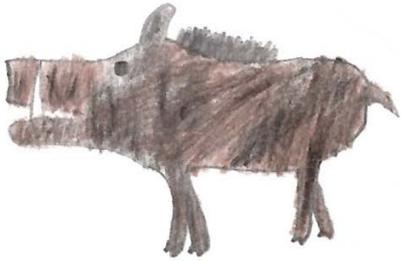


Mr. Chalmers' farm covers 8000 hectares. He farms 60% rice, 20% sheep and 20% crops. He has dorpers (which are sheep that you don't have to shear) as they are more suited to desert conditions. Mr. Chalmers, his wife and two sons, and five employees run the farm.

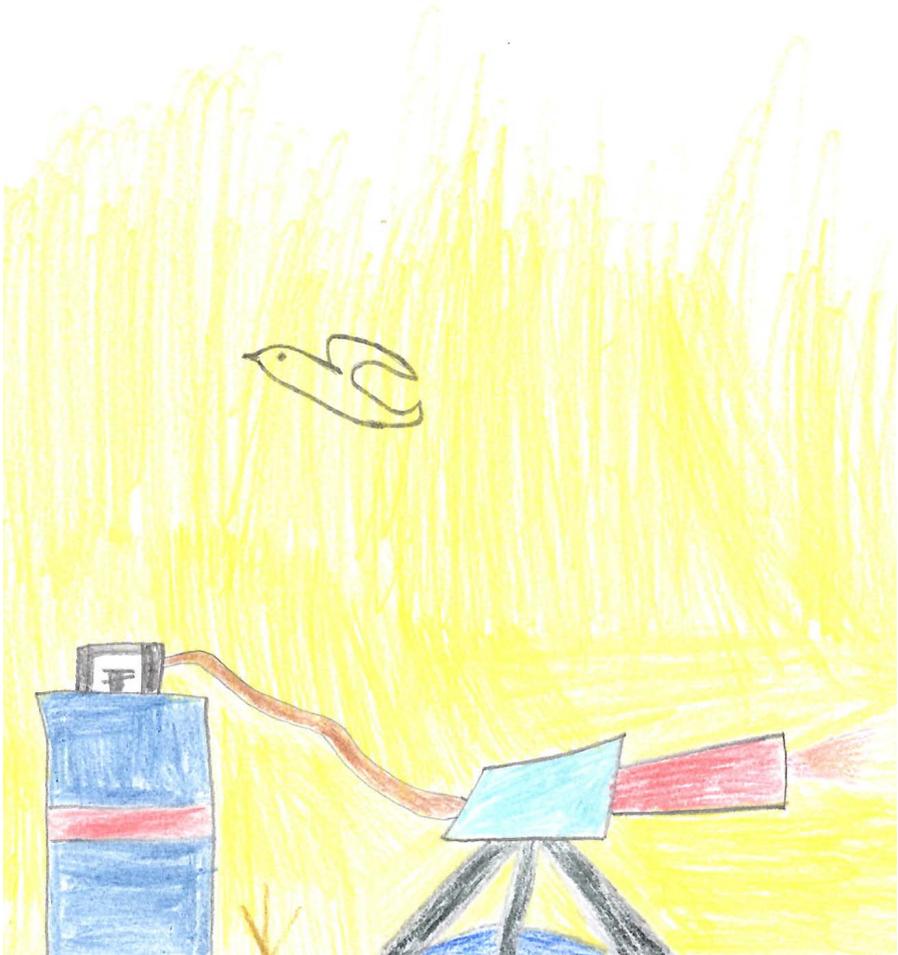


The property has a range of animal pests. Amazingly, the most damage is caused by two of the smallest pests in farming. They are army grubs and earth mites, which eat the grain and pasture.

Other pests on the farm are pigs, foxes, ducks, mice, rabbits, coots, crows, cats and an increasing number of deer.



Over the years, Mr. Chalmers has been working on solutions that do not harm the native animals. He uses 1080 poison to control rabbits and foxes as this doesn't affect emus and raptors. Ducks do not get hurt as he uses scare guns. He buries fox baits so other animals do not accidentally eat them.





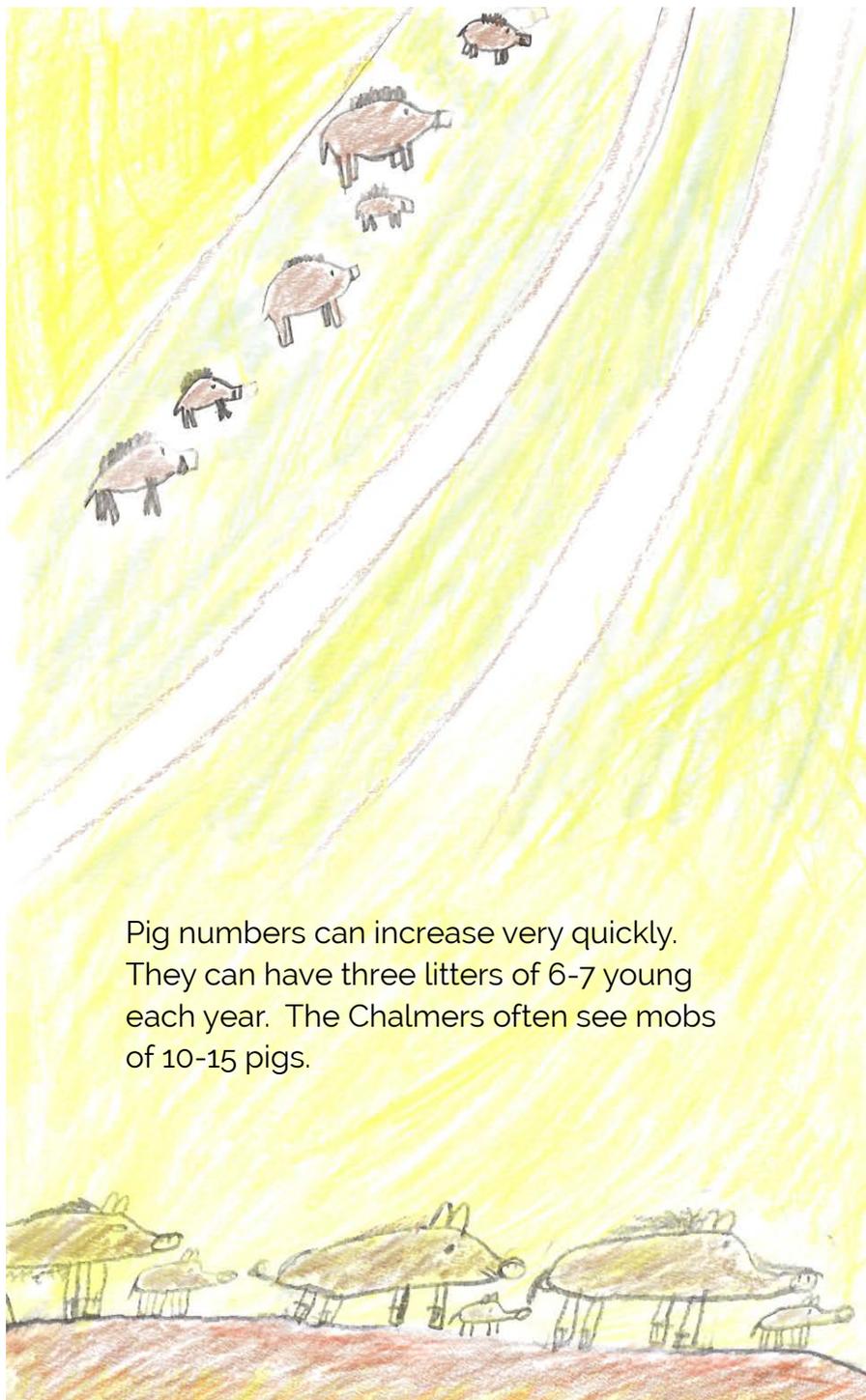
Rice is trampled by pigs after the water is drained off before harvesting. Mr. Chalmers loses about an acre of his rice to pigs each year.

To protect their babies, they gather up piles of stubble and make a mound that can be a metre high and four metres in diameter.



Pigs also damage the environment because they dig up the ground and rub on trees.

They like to eat earthworms, so dig up pastures and channel banks looking for them. They dig up old reed beds looking for underground bulbs.



Pig numbers can increase very quickly. They can have three litters of 6-7 young each year. The Chalmers often see mobs of 10-15 pigs.

Mr. Chalmers estimates that there are 30-40 pigs on the farm at any time. Pig shooters, the family and employees kill 80-90 each year, and some also die of diseases.

As well as shooting, they also use a pig trap that they made from an old stock crate from the back of a ute.



They found that dead pig is the best bait. Once a pig goes into the trap and dies, they leave it there to help catch the next pig. They once used grain, but caught dorpers instead.



Mr. Chalmers knows control is a continual process because feral pests will always be around, but he can keep them to a limited number. If pest numbers build up, then he knows he has to work harder. He concentrates on pests that harm the farm economy.



Thank you, Mr. Chalmers, for telling us about the feral animals that you have to deal with, and for showing us around your property.

Thank you, Mrs. Chalmers, for your lovely scones.





Harry Sides, James Bradford,
Charlie Waters and Thomas Nevinson

2015 Year 5 & 6, St Michael's Parish Primary School, Deniliquin

CONGRATULATIONS

Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre and
the Creative Catchment Kids Program won the
2015 NSW Junior Landcare Team Award and will be
competing in the 2016 National Landcare Awards.



Local Land
Services

