

Impact of introduced species

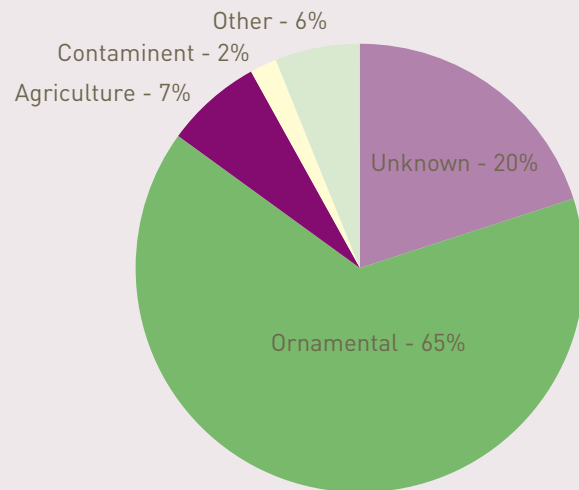
Introduced plants and animals

Since European settlement the introduction of non-native plant species has been extensive and rapid, mainly due to the growth of agriculture, forestry and introduction of exotic plants through domestic nurseries. By 1900 approximately 340 plant species had been introduced into Victoria. By the end of the 20th century the number had risen to more than 1,200. Some of these introduced plants have proven to be invasive, becoming established and reproducing in the wild. Blackberries, for example, have become a major problem in regional Victoria since their release in the 19th century. However, other introduced plant species like wheat have become important crops for domestic and export markets.








Of the 90 species of land based mammals known to have inhabited Victoria upon European arrival, 9 are now extinct within the state and 10 are totally extinct. Animals such as foxes and feral cats can pose a direct threat to native wildlife populations through predation, while others like rabbits have extensive impacts on soils and vegetation through burrowing and grazing. Introduced domestic animals such as cattle and sheep have had landscape impacts although they have also provided a major contribution to the nation's economy.

Method of exotic plant introduction in Australia¹

Probable means of introduction, 1971 to 1995



Impact of selected introduced animal species²

INTRODUCED SPECIES	IMPACTS
 rabbits	Domestic rabbits arrived with the first fleet in 1788. The first wild rabbits were released near Geelong in 1859. They have since become a major pest contributing to vegetation loss and soil erosion.
 birds	Species such as the common myna and starlings compete with native birds for food and nest sites.
 fish	Species such as the European carp and the brown trout compete with native species.
 dogs	Dogs were introduced through Aboriginal settlement and increased with European settlement. Wild or feral dogs can cause destruction of animal stock.
 cats	Domestic cats were introduced with early European settlers. Domestic or feral cats can destroy native birds and mammals.
 foxes	The European red fox was released near Melbourne in 1845 for sport hunting. Taking only 50 years to cross Australia, it has become a major pest preying on many native species.
 rodents	The house mouse and the rat could have entered Australia on or even before 1788 via visiting European ships. The house mouse can sometimes reach plague proportions in wheat belt regions.

Sources ¹Carr et. al. 1992 *Environmental Weed Invasions in Victoria*; Carr 2001 "Environmental weed invasions" ²DPI 2005 *Information Notes* on pests and weeds; BRS various years *Managing Vertebrate Pests*; IACRC 2005 "Pest Portal" www.feral.org.au