



Get ready for rabbit control now

Article courtesy of Tablelands LHPA

As the weather warms up and the grass gets growing, you can expect one of the more destructive pest animals in Australia to increase in population again. The European rabbit has been present in Australia for over 150 years and has colonised most areas. Wild rabbit populations can quickly increase under ideal conditions. To breed they need high protein food such as green grass which should become more abundant as spring approaches.

All landholders need to be aware that wild rabbit populations may increase soon and put in place plans to reduce these populations and their harbour.

There are a few steps you should consider prior to commencing control work, such as:

- Assess the problem and see if it is localised or whether it also impacts on neighbouring land. If it involves neighbour's land, the best approach is a coordinated control program.
- Identify where the rabbits are living, i.e., blackberries, burrows, piles of timber, sheds.
- Identify their preferred feeding areas. This will normally be an area where the vegetation is shorter, there is a lot of rabbit dung and the ground has numerous shallow scratches.
- If you are planning on carrying out a baiting program, the area between where the rabbits are living and where they are feeding is the most appropriate area to commence feeding.
- The next thing to consider is what time of the year it is and how much feed is available.
- The above will often dictate what form of control should be carried out. Your local LHPA ranger can assist you with advice on the best control method for the time of the year.
- Generally baiting programs should be carried out when feed is scarce. Rabbits are more attracted to other food sources when they are hungry and you will get better results.
- Different forms of harbour destruction can also be utilised at appropriate times of the year.
- Biological controls such as rabbit haemorrhagic disease (RHD) and Myxoma viruses are often circulating in the wild rabbit population and will often show up during the summer months when there is adequate moisture and vectors.

It is a legal requirement for all landholders in NSW to control declared pest animals such as wild rabbits on their property at all times. LHPAs can assist you by providing advice on best practice control measures for your individual situation, and may have equipment to help with control, so contact your local LHPA office today.