



## AS A LANDHOLDER, CONTROLLING RABBITS IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

### Biosecurity risk

The European rabbit is Australia's most widespread and destructive environmental and agricultural vertebrate pest. Rabbits damage our local environments and pose a biosecurity risk by:

- destroying vegetation including lawns, playing fields, natural systems and agricultural lands
- directly competing with stock and native animals for food and habitat
- causing erosion, soil loss, destabilisation of waterway banks and undermining building foundations

### Legal responsibility - General Biosecurity Duty

Biosecurity is a shared responsibility where the government, industry and people of NSW work together to protect the economy, environment and community from the impacts of pest animals.

Under the *NSW Biosecurity Act 2015* every landholder has a General Biosecurity Duty (GBD):

*Any person who deals with biosecurity matter or a carrier and who knows, or ought reasonably to know, the biosecurity risk posed or likely to be posed by the biosecurity matter, carrier or dealing has a biosecurity duty to ensure that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the biosecurity risk is prevented, eliminated or minimised.*

All land managers can reduce the risk posed by rabbit populations by undertaking activities such as:

- destroying warrens and known harbour such as piles of old logs or bricks, dense weed infestation or clearing under old buildings
- actively participating in coordinated pest animal control programs such as baiting or shooting
- keeping pet rabbits secure and euthanising unwanted pet rabbits

### Manage your situation

#### You need to consider

Effective rabbit control involves using a variety of control measures across multiple properties. Landholders need to be prepared to undertake ongoing programs, over many years, to achieve a reduction in local rabbit populations.

#### Assessing your property

Start by identifying and mapping the location of rabbits and the extent of their impact on your property. Discuss with your neighbours your concerns and gauge rabbit impacts they are experiencing.

Things to look for:

- fresh scats
- fresh scratching of the grass/soil
- vegetation chewed to 40cm from the ground
- burrowing or worn tracks leading under structures or piles of debris
- warrens

#### Set goals

Work with your neighbours to determine what resources (e.g. time, money and expertise) you have and what you want to achieve.

Prepare an action plan. Start with short term goals (for a 12-month program) and how you will continue an ongoing program to ensure rabbit numbers do not return to the original population.

#### Working together

In discussion with your neighbours/community, consider joining or starting formalised groups such as Landcare or pest control associations.

Local Land Services will provide technical advice to any landholders, however will only assist in coordination of group control programs when there are five or more adjoining properties involved.

## Control options

### Baiting – primary control

Baiting (using 1080 or Pindone) is often the best control option for a quick reduction in rabbit numbers. However, baiting is short lived if not combined with other control methods. Landholders must hold relevant chemical qualifications to use poisons in NSW.

Pindone is the only poison that can be used in urban areas (on properties greater than 1000m<sup>2</sup>) as there is an antidote available (Vitamin K) from a veterinarian should any off-target poisoning occur. Pindone is applied to either oats or carrots. Oat bait is available over the counter at rural merchant suppliers, while carrot bait must be supplied by an Authorised Control Officer (ACO) of Local Land Services.

Sodium fluoroacetate (1080) can be used in rural settings and some peri-urban settings where the Pesticide

Control Order (PCO) allows. An ACO must undertake a risk assessment when issuing 1080 products. A particular PCO consideration is distance restrictions, which require bait to be laid at least:

- 150m from your own dwelling
- 500m from another dwelling
- 20m from a domestic water supply
- 5m off a boundary fence

### Warren destruction – primary control

The aim of warren destruction, or ripping, is not just to bury the warren entrances but to ensure thorough breakdown of the warren structure. Warren and above ground harbor destruction is the most important part of lasting control by removing the areas rabbits depend on for survival.

### Biological control – primary control

Releases of rabbit diseases are organised by Local Land Services or DPI. Myxomatosis and Rabbit Calicivirus virus are rabbit-specific diseases that have been released in Australia. Both persist in rabbit populations but cannot be relied on to control rabbits alone. Some rabbit populations will have immunity to these diseases and will survive an outbreak. Using other control methods when a disease is active can capitalise on an outbreak.

### Shooting – primary or secondary control

Shooting with firearms is preferable in rural areas and some peri-urban areas as opposed to urban areas where noise and third party injury have a higher risk. Shooting has historically been utilised after an initial knock down of the population via baiting or other controls to destroy the individuals that survived that initial knock down. However the availability of thermal imaging scopes and detection equipment and the development of air rifle technology is facilitating high levels of rabbit control, and allowing operations to occur in residential areas due to increased safety of the rifles and the thermal imaging technology. Shooting operations utilising these improved technologies are being used successfully as primary control, but persistent and repeated treatments are essential.

### Trapping – secondary control

Trapping is a time-intensive control option. It controls small amounts of rabbits at a time and only should be used where other options cannot be utilised. Soft-jawed traps with rubber-padded jaws or cage trap can be used. Trapping is useful if you are concerned about off-target (native) animals but it leaves you with a live rabbit to dispatch.



Warren ripper credit NSW DPI

## Fumigation – secondary control

Fumigation of warrens is labour intensive and costly. It is best used as a follow-up technique to poison, such as when rabbit density is low.

Fumigation can be used where ripping cannot be done due to inaccessible location (e.g. near rocky outcrops, along fences or riverbanks, around trees) or when there is a risk of soil erosion or damage to conservation areas.

## Fencing – preventative measure

Rabbit proof fencing can be installed around properties or assets. Maintenance is essential to effective fencing. Fencing will also prevent movement of other small animals and this should be considered in selecting this option.

## Where to get more information

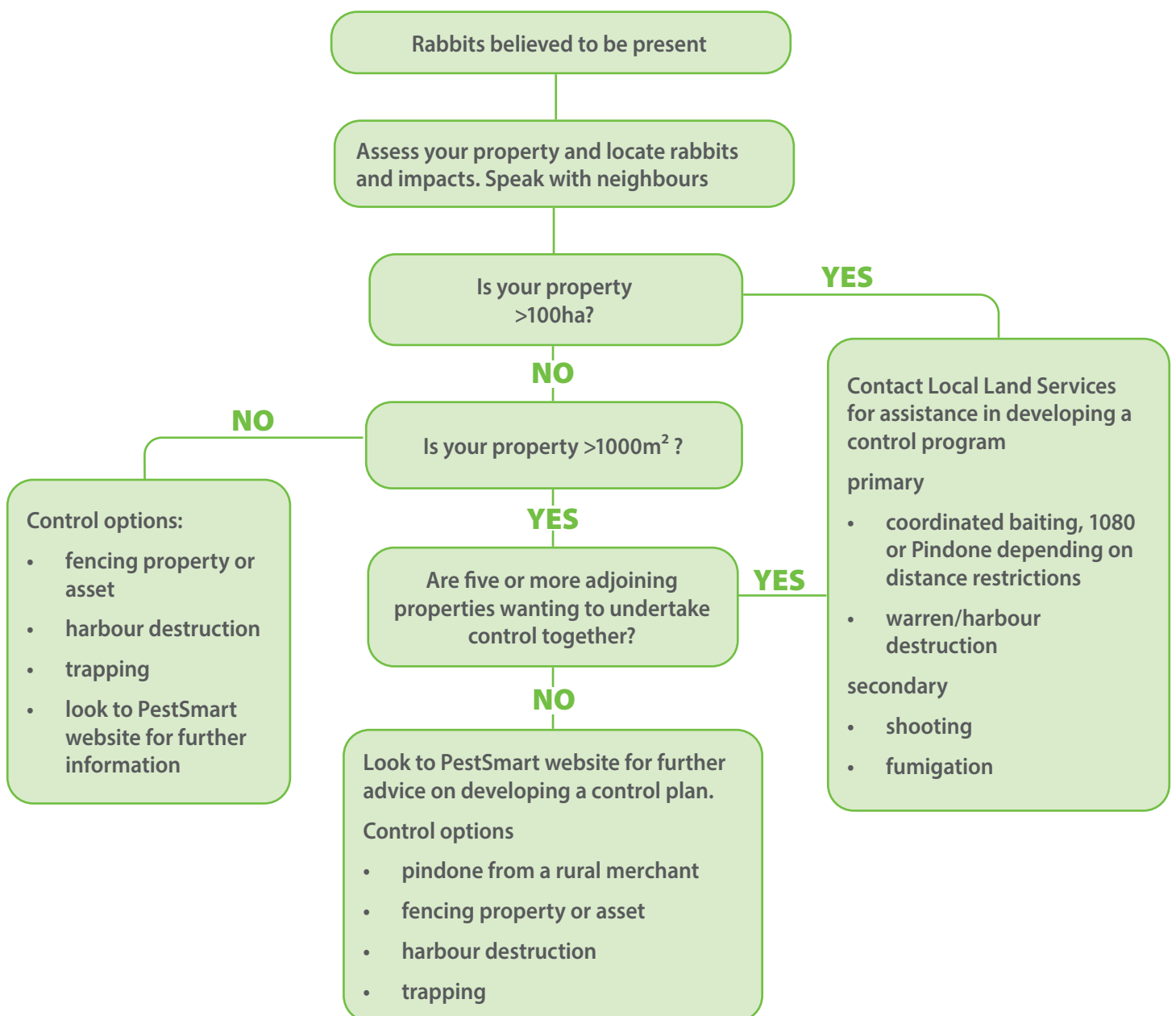
For further information on the history, impacts and guiding documents for rabbits

<https://pestsmart.org.au/toolkits/european-rabbits/>

## 1080 PCO and information from the EPA

<https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/pesticides/pesticides-nsw-overview/pesticide-control-orders/guidance-for-using-1080>

*Follow the steps below if you believe rabbits to be on your property*



**For more information about Hunter Local Land Services:**

1300 795 299 • [admin.hunter@lls.nsw.gov.au](mailto:admin.hunter@lls.nsw.gov.au)

[www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/hunter](http://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/hunter) • [www.facebook.com/HunterLLS/](https://www.facebook.com/HunterLLS/)