

## Signs of wild rabbit behaviour

Before deciding on control strategies, monitor rabbit populations using daytime observations and spotlight counts.

Use the following standard rabbit density classifications to assess and map density:

High density	abundant active warrens, rabbits visible anytime
Medium density	active warrens present, a fair amount visible sign (scratches, dung heaps, feeding areas)
Low density	some visible signs, few holes
Zero	no visible signs



Tarnya Cox

## We're here to help - just ask!

Consult your nearest Hunter LLS Biosecurity Ranger who has the knowledge and experience to assist you to manage wild rabbits and other invasive species by:

- providing advice
- supplying baits and traps
- assisting with coordinating baiting programs
- becoming involved with other control techniques such as trapping programs.

**Contact us 1300 795 299**

### Maitland Saleyards

Ph: 02 4932 8866

### Merriwa

Ph: 6548 2175

### Muswellbrook

Ph: 02 6542 4444

### Paterson

Ph: 02 4930 1030

### Scone

Ph: 02 6545 1311

### Singleton

Ph: 6572 2944

### Taree

Ph: 02 6551 8994

### Tocal

Ph: 02 4939 8967

### Wingham

Ph: 02 6553 4233

### Wyong

Ph: 02 4352 5100

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## Problems with rabbits?

A landholders guide to the continuous control of pest animals



Chris Cox

## Need more information on biosecurity?

[hunter.lis.nsw.gov.au](http://hunter.lis.nsw.gov.au)  
[dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity](http://dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity)  
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1300 795 299

## Why are wild rabbits a problem?

Wild rabbits are Australia's most widespread and destructive environmental and agricultural vertebrate pest. They cause significant economic losses by damaging crops and pastures, and disturb soils leading to erosion and loss of top soil. Rabbits also damage native plants and directly compete with native wildlife for food and shelter.

Females can breed at any time of the year if there is sufficient feed available; they can begin breeding at four months of age and may produce five or more litters in a year, with up to five young per litter.

Wild rabbits are a declared pest under the [Local Land Services Act 2013](#) and all land managers are obliged to control rabbits on their land.

## What can you do to control rabbits?

Rabbits are dependent on warrens or other shelter so destruction of these will greatly reduce the local rabbit population. Rabbits are also highly susceptible to disease (myxomatosis and rabbit haemorrhagic disease).

Common methods of control include:

- baiting
- biological controls such as myxomatosis and rabbit haemorrhagic disease
- fumigation
- shooting
- fencing
- trapping.



## Baiting program procedure

1. Contact your nearest Hunter LLS Biosecurity Ranger to determine which poison best suits your situation.
2. Determine where the rabbits are feeding. This is not around the obvious buck dung mounds, but in areas of young, sweet growing grasses where scratching is evident.
3. Lay a bait trail; place a handful of small pieces of carrot, about 2cm in size, every 4-5 paces through the area where the rabbits are feeding. For larger areas, a bait layer can be used.
4. It is a requirement that rabbits are given at least three 'free' feeds (without poison) on alternate nights prior to the poison bait being laid. This is to gauge the amount of poison that will be required and to ensure that even shy feeders are taking the free feeds before poisoning.
5. It is important to monitor free feed uptake to ensure all rabbits have the opportunity to feed. Ideally, by the end of the third free feed, about 10% of the bait should be left the next morning. Free feeds may need to be increased over the period as more rabbits access it.

6. After the baiting program all carcasses and remaining poisoned baits must be collected and buried to reduce the risk of secondary poisoning of pets and other non-target animals.
7. Habitat destruction, including ripping of rabbit warrens and removal of above ground shelter such as dense vegetation and weeds, is essential follow up to the control methods listed here. However, when removing vegetation, land managers must ensure that they are operating within clearing laws and do not threaten endangered species.
8. Any remaining rabbits can now effectively be removed by shooting and trapping.

Keep working dogs well fed and chained when not at work, and muzzle them if working in or near a baited area. Do not trap, shoot or disturb the rabbits in an area for several weeks before starting a baiting program.

## When to bait

The best time to bait is during a dry period when rabbits are not breeding and there is little other feed available. However, this is not always possible and rabbits can be baited at any time of year, provided that the free feeding process is carried out effectively.

