

Rabbit control

GETTING IT RIGHT



Boxthorn Harbour - removal of cover that harbours rabbits is an important step in effective control



Cover - rabbits use available cover to protect their warrens



Crop Damage - crops are impacted along roadsides where rabbits establish

Rabbit control is about overcoming the rabbits' tremendous breeding potential and not simply about killing rabbits! The number of rabbits and rabbit warrens left behind to repopulate determines the effectiveness of a control program

Following a five step program for best results

Rabbit control is most effective in summer when numbers are lowest, feed is short for good bait uptake, rabbits are not breeding (rabbit kittens are hard to poison) and soil is dry so that warrens collapse easily when ripped. Rabbit damage is more noticeable during winter/spring – when numbers are higher.

- **Plan** your program when damage is visible
- **Poison** rabbits over summer/ autumn to reduce numbers
- **RIP WARRENS** and destroy cover to provide long term control
- **Fumigate** to follow up
- **Monitor** results

Step 1: Planning

Plan your rabbit control in advance

TIMING IS CRITICAL.

Assess the number of holes, how they are distributed and the percentage that are active before beginning. This will help you evaluate the most suitable control method and equipment.

Step 2 Poisoning to reduce rabbit numbers

- 1080 is a naturally occurring substance that is highly toxic to rabbits and relatively safe to native wildlife. Only the Northern and Yorke Natural Resources Management Board (NY NRMB) can supply 1080 treated oats.
- **WARNING:** 1080 is toxic to dogs
 - There is no antidote available for 1080
 - Directions for use must be followed carefully
- Remove all livestock first
- Train rabbits by applying at least three feeds of untreated oats (free feeds) in trails established along a shallow furrow of disturbed earth. The Board has a disc baitlayer available for use.
- Lay trail where rabbits are active and feeding, about three or four days apart. Rabbits will often cross a single bait trail (e.g. along the fence line) without stopping to get from the warren to feeding areas.
- Free feeds are laid at a rate of 4.2kg oats per km are needed for 10Ha of rabbit affected land. Lay more trail if the free feed is completely taken.
- Lay 1080 poisoned oats at 2.8kg per km late in the afternoon
- Collect any carcasses the following morning and bury them.



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Bait shy rabbits

It is essential that free feeds are used or shy feeders may not come on to the trail. If allowed to survive they quickly form a bait shy population.

Pindone

An alternative poison – it is an anticoagulant that is more expensive and poses greater risk to wildlife. However it is less toxic to dogs and an antidote is available in cases of accidental poisoning, so it may be suited for use around built up areas. Care is still required.

- Pindone can be purchased direct from rural merchandise stores.

Step 3: Warren destruction

WARREN RIPPING is the key to cost-effective long-term rabbit control.

Rabbit populations will recover quickly after baiting if the warrens are not destroyed. Rabbits depend on the warren for breeding success, protection from predators and from high summer temperatures. A control program should include warren destruction.

- Start ripping a few days to a week after poisoning
- Ideally rips are made in a series of parallel lines 0.4m apart and 0.7 meters deep, then cross ripped. The aim is to destroy the warred structure. Some burrows extend well outside of the visible warren entrances ... so go wide and go deep. Destroy all holes.
- If native vegetation will be damaged, clearance approval is required.
- Location of underground cables and pipes must be considered/
- Remove any shelter that is harbouring rabbits on the surface.

Removing debris and other material the rabbits are using for cover is an essential component of best practice in rabbit control.

Step 4: Fumigation

- Fumigation can be used in sensitive areas that are unsuitable for ripping and as a follow up after ripping
- Use Phostoxin tablets which release poisonous gas when exposed to moisture
- Holes to expose the tunnel should be dug back and two tablets (wrapped in moist paper) placed as far back into the hole as possible.
- Fill the holes to prevent the gas escaping.

Step 5: Monitor

- **Be persistent** in checking for reopened holes in two to six weeks after poisoning and/or ripping. You can re-rep reopened holes but it is often more practical to fumigate them.

Further questions can be discussed with one of the Board's Authorised Officers.



Baitlayer - baitlayer is available for hire over summer months

For more information**Natural Resources Centre - Clare (head office)**

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