Controlling rabbits in urban and urban fringe areas

Factsheet | November 2025

Wild and escaped domestic rabbits can establish themselves in urban areas and become pests, causing significant land damage as they dig, burrow and eat plants.

Controlling rabbits in an urban setting can be difficult as options are limited for smaller properties. The aim is to protect assets and minimize impacts.

Identify the problem

The first step is to identify the location of any warrens or refuge sites, such as thick vegetation (e.g. garden beds) or wood heaps. Rabbits use these sheltered sites for protection and as a safe place to breed.

Rabbits are territorial and generally don't travel more than 200 metres from these sites, with most of their feeding done within 25 to 50 metres. Look for signs of where rabbits have been active, such as burrows, fresh scratches in the soil, scattered or piled dung and damage to vegetation.

When you locate their refuge, estimate the total area the rabbits will move around in as this is where your control program will need to concentrate. Rabbits do not respect property boundaries so take joint action with your neighbors for the greatest outcome.

Choose your control methods

Rabbit control can be complex. To achieve the best results, plan and prepare your control program in advance.

Several methods can be used. It is best to use a combination of approaches that suit your situation, and to work with your neighbors.

Although wild rabbits are pests they must still be managed in a humane manner. If in doubt, seek advice from the RSPCA.

Rabbits can cause significant damage

Exclusion fencing

Fences can keep rabbits out and prevent damage in certain areas, but they don't reduce rabbit numbers. Fences should be 60 cm high with a maximum wire mesh gauge of 30 mm, fixed securely to posts and buried into the ground to a depth of 30 cm to stop rabbits from digging underneath.

Exclusion fencing can be permanent and cost-effective and is often the only viable option in urban and urban fringe areas.

Baiting

Currently, Pindone coated oats is the only bait that can be used in urban settings, however its use is restricted to properties larger than 1000m^2, and only in accordance with label instructions. Pindone oat bait products are available in ready-to-use forms: IO Shotgun Rabbit bait, Rabbait® and Bunnybait®.

Pindone-coated oats can be bought at most hardware and agricultural retailers. It comes in a sealed plastic bucket that can be stored at room temperature. For best results, ensure to **follow the label on the product.** It is recommended to first use untreated oat grain before poisoned grain is laid. Rabbits are fussy eaters and this will encourage them to eat the oats and enables you to assess how much is required to lay out.

During summer, Pindone-coated diced carrots are available from neighboring Hills and Fleurieu and Northern and Yorke landscape boards for properties that are larger than 1000m^2 and land managers have completed the online learning module. Carrots are often taken up more by rabbits over summer as they are juicy.

Whichever type of Pindone bait is used, to be effective it needs to be laid on three separate occasions following pre feeds, about 5 days apart. It can be laid as a trail through the feeding area or in bait stations. If possible, minimise access to alternative feed sources (e.g. lawns, gardens and fresh greens) before baiting. Check the product label and information for full directions of use and safety.

You must display signage notifying the use of baits on your property. Please refer to Department of Primary Industries and Regions for more information and search for 'wild rabbits': pir.sa.gov.au.

Risk to pets: All pets should be kept away from bait and prevented from eating poisoned rabbit carcasses. If a pet does become affected, vitamin K can be administered by a vet as an antidote.

Fumigating

If a rabbit warren has been located and can be easily accessed, fumigation may be an option. Fumigation will only control rabbits in the burrow at the time of fumigation, but it can be useful in situations where baiting is not an option.

Nearly all available products for fumigation are poisons and their use is restricted to those with specific chemical safety accreditation. Fumigation should only be carried out by a suitably qualified person.

Trapping

There are two types of cage trap that can be used in urban areas. One is placed in the burrow entrance and traps the rabbit by having one-way door flaps that allow the rabbit to enter but not leave. The other is used where rabbits are eating and relies on food, such as carrots, to entice the rabbit into the cage where it sets off a trigger, closing the cage door.

While trapping is an alternative when baiting and fumigation can't be used, it's not effective in reducing high numbers of rabbits quickly as it requires significant time and effort. **Traps must be checked regularly, and trapped animals must be humanely euthanized**. Landholders should not trap a rabbit before determining and prearranging the method of humane euthanasia such as through a licensed veterinarian.

It is illegal to release a wild rabbit. Wild rabbits cannot be trapped and relocated.

Traps can be purchased through hardware or agricultural retailers or from the manufacturers. **Note steel-jawed traps are prohibited.**

Removing their refuge

Once rabbits have been removed from the warren or burrow it's possible to then destroy it. To do this, collapse it in on itself with earth moving machinery or hand tools, then fill and level the area.

If this is not possible (e.g. the burrow is under a concrete slab) then block the entrance to the warren with material that will prevent the rabbit from reopening it.

Biological control

There are two biological control agents introduced in wild rabbit populations in Australia – Myxoma– and Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease virus (known as Calici virus).

There is no reliable method to predict the timing or impact of these agents on rabbits. The effect of these agents varies from year to year as they depend on a range of specific environmental factors.

Risk to pets: Keep your pet rabbit in an enclosure to ensure there is no contact with wild rabbits. More information on protecting your pet can be found on the RSPCA website at rspcasa.org.au.

Reporting

If you find a diseased or dead rabbit, please report it using Rabbitscan at: pestsmart.org.au. Live rabbit sightings can be mapped on Feral Scan: feralscan.org.au.

Managing burrows

In many areas, other wildlife such as echidnas and goannas, may use burrows that have been dug out by rabbits. If you don't see any fresh rabbit droppings, but you see some tracks heading into the hole, then consider leaving this habitat feature which could be valuable for our native wildlife.

More information

Detailed advice on planning and control efforts can be found on the Pest Smart website: pestsmart.org.au.

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