

FACT SHEET: Controlling pest animals



You need a well-planned strategy to control pest animals effectively on your property.

Depending on the level of infestation, your strategy may be a significant component of your Property Management Plan.

Why are pest animals a problem?

Pest animals are destructive. They reduce economic and environmental assets and the quality of land.

In the natural environment, they:

- compete with native animals for food and habitat
- overgraze native vegetation and pasture
- prey on native animals
- spread disease and prevent regeneration of native animal and plant species.

In Nillumbik, anecdotal evidence suggests a steady increase in the number of pest animals, particularly rabbits, sighted throughout urban and rural areas of the Shire.

While rabbits and foxes are quite common, sometimes native animals, particularly kangaroos, are also considered a problem by rural residents when populations are large.

Pests are a concern for landholders whose properties contain significant fauna and flora, profitable and productive land, or other important assets.

What can you do about pest animals?

Talk to your neighbours

This is highly recommended. For successful control, broad-scale management across several interconnecting properties is best.

Control works on your property alone can be ineffective and costly because pests move between properties.

Foxes and cats, in particular, have a large homing range which broadens their access to food, safe harbour and diverse prey.

The benefits of working with your neighbours include:

- more effective control (significantly reducing pest numbers) and improving land conditions over a large area
- saving money by sharing costs and equipment
- exchanging knowledge and ideas
- developing a long-term management goal together
- opportunities to rotate stock if applying bait on individual properties
- opportunities for large-scale control programs through cooperative action.



Integrate control methods

To maximise control, you need to adopt at least two measures. Consider all the options. The methods you choose over a period of time will be influenced by site conditions (natural vegetation, exposed areas, weeds and so on), cost and pest numbers. Integrating methods will help you succeed and save you money, time and labour.

With rabbit control, as an example, the integrated control options are:

- removing harbour (places to shelter and hide such as woody weeds) before baiting or fumigating dens or burrows
- combining fumigation with den or burrow destruction
- erecting exclusion fences, and baiting remaining pests within the exclusion area
- poisons.

Always seek advice from the Department of Economic Development, Jobs Transport and Resources (DEDJTR) when planning to use poisons as a pest control method. A permit is required from DEDJTR for some poisons and an assessment of fauna throughout the control area and adjoining land is recommended.

Council's Land Management Officer can provide advice on pest animal control, carry out site assessments and provide other land management advice and support.

Contact 9433 3316 for more information.

Case Study: Christmas Hills Landcare Group rabbit control

Christmas Hills Landcare Group designed a rabbit control project with information from an earlier project which mapped warrens and weed species.

The owners of 32 properties covering 358 hectares, in an area with large infestations of rabbits and blackberries, agreed to take part in rabbit control works.

Prior to commencing works, a spotlight count along a 10.3 kilometres transect route across several participating properties counted 651 rabbits. This led to an estimation of more than 6000 rabbits in the target area.

Funding from Nillumbik Shire Council, Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority and Trust for Nature was used to:

- engage a contractor to spray blackberries on 25 properties covering 291 hectares
- purchase wire mesh to construct 80 bait stations, to Parks Victoria's design, and some pindone oats bait
- purchase a smoke machine for detecting the entrances to each warren
- engage a contractor with a mini-excavator to collapse more than 100 warrens.

A volunteer ferreter also removed 130 rabbits.

A field day was held to demonstrate and help people understand the different techniques. Six different rabbit dishes were served for lunch using rabbits caught by the ferreter the previous week!

Several factors have impeded the progress and potential success of this project. Wet weather hindered the ferreter, who eventually withdrew, and favoured the growth of grass providing abundant food for rabbits.

As a result, only some baits were taken during the baiting phase. Wet weather also hindered access for the excavator so this phase was extended and not all properties scheduled for warren collapsing were treated when the project funds ran out.

A follow up spotlight count is planned for later in 2012 to assess the overall impact of the project on rabbit numbers.

Useful links

[Department of Economic Development, Jobs Transport and Resources \(DEDJTR\) - Victorian Pest Animals](#)

[DEDJTR - Agriculture](#)

[Pest animals page on Nillumbik Shire Council website](#)

[Rabbit Scan](#)