



National Feral Rabbit Management Coordination Program
Work Plan 2025-2027



Introduction

Background

The aim of National Feral Rabbit Management Coordination program is to create a strong collaborative culture across Australia whereby those impacted by rabbits can successfully manage rabbits in their area, through easy access to information, the use of best practice and having successful partnerships with others.

Many aspects of rabbit management require expertise¹. Rabbit management can be further complicated with climate change, change in land use, change in legislation, change in funding and investment, change in social licence and disinformation. While some land managers have the skills, there is an opportunity to improve their understanding of the problem, promote the management options available and emphasise the value of collaborative on-ground action.

The National Feral Rabbit Management Coordinator role was established in late 2024 to raise the profile of feral rabbit impacts and re-engage and invigorate land managers. The role aims to stimulate the provision of necessary training and support, so control techniques are applied more widely and more effectively to manage Australia's most invasive and damaging species, the European rabbit. It aims to develop expertise and encourage coordinated action and collaboration, rather than focusing on eliminating the rabbits.

The Centre for Invasive Species Solutions (CISS) is a delivery partner and employs the National Feral Rabbit Management Coordinator. The project receives funding support from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Rabbit-Free Australia, QLD Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board and NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

¹Williams K, Parer I, Coman B, Burley J, Braysher M (1995). *Managing Vertebrate Pests: Rabbits*. Bureau of Resource Sciences and CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology. Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

Rabbit damage

Despite over a century of effort, Australia's 'rabbit problem' is still a major burden.

Many scientific studies indicate they are probably our most serious vertebrate pest¹. Rabbits inhabit over 70% of Australia and cost rural economies more than \$200 million per annum².

Rabbits also endanger over 300 threatened native species listed under Commonwealth environmental legislation, which represents 21% of the total number of species listed. Rabbits also threaten the ecological character of many internationally significant wetland sites listed on the Ramsar Convention and they can damage or destroy First Nations Peoples' cultural heritage, impact culturally significant native species and cultural practices.

In arid zones, rabbit densities below one rabbit per hectare can prevent the regeneration of many native plants. If rabbits are not reduced to very low numbers in these regions, the decline in native trees and shrubs through lack of seedling recruitment will continue, changing landscapes and flora and fauna communities permanently.

Rabbits can also damage community infrastructure such as buildings, houses, parks and gardens, which contributes to a decline in public spaces and social amenity.

In response to the climate, rabbit populations fluctuate in most of Australia. In recent years, high rainfall in some regions has favoured rabbit breeding. Rabbit populations are increasing not only in rural areas but in areas that are challenging to manage, such as urban areas and refuge areas along waterways and rocky hills¹.

² Hafi, A, Arthur, T, Medina, M, Warnakula, C, Addai, D & Stenekes, N 2023, Cost of established pest animals and weeds to Australian agricultural producers, ABARES, Canberra, October, 2023



Rabbit impacts





Vision

The overall vision of the program is for feral rabbits to be effectively managed, reducing their harmful impact on Australia's agricultural production, environment, First Nations Peoples culture and our communities.

Goals

01

Raise awareness: Increase community awareness of the damage caused by feral rabbits to the environment, agriculture, cultural heritage and community infrastructure.

02

Increase capacity: Increase capability and adoption of best practice rabbit management by land managers to reduce the damage to the environment, agriculture, cultural heritage and community infrastructure.

03

Build partnerships: Connect people to expertise and with other stakeholders working on the rabbit issue. Support land managers to collaborate, build networks and deliver coordinated rabbit management programs.

04

Improve national standards: Review and improve the national standards for the effective and humane management of rabbits and their application

05

Protect important assets: Facilitate the prioritisation and resourcing of rabbit management projects to protect important assets.





Work plan

The implementation of the workplan relies on cooperation and collaboration between a large range of stakeholders to support land managers, including First Nations Peoples, community, not-for-profits, government and industry that have an interest in feral rabbit management.

The work plan is a living document that will be reviewed annually to consider changes in opportunities or challenges.



Year 1

01

The focus of the first year is to raise awareness of damage and destruction caused by feral rabbits in Australia to motivate action, promote solutions to start to increase capacity and the adoption of best practice rabbit management, develop partnerships and encourage collaboration across community, government stakeholders; and improve national standards.



Goal 1

Goal 1 - Raising awareness	Action	Indicators
Increase community awareness of the damage caused by feral rabbits to the environment, agriculture, cultural heritage and community infrastructure.	1.1 Develop and implement a communication and engagement plan to motivate land managers and agencies to take action on managing rabbits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication and engagement Plan developed by 31 August 2025.
	1.2 Support the adoption of best practice integrated rabbit management by land managers by promoting existing rabbit management programs, PestSmart and other resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quarterly newsletters developed by 31 December 2025.• Increase the number of PestSmart website users from June to 31 December 2025.
	1.3 Engage with stakeholders to optimise the sharing of rabbit management information through existing, and new networks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek feedback from networks on the effectiveness of content to increase awareness of rabbit impacts and prompt action and work with partners to improve key messaging by 31 December 2025.

Goal 2

Goal 2 -Increase capacity	Action	Indicators
<p>Increase capability and adoption of best practice rabbit management by land managers to reduce the damage to the environment, agriculture, cultural heritage and community infrastructure.</p>	<p>2.1 Review and update PestSmart rabbit toolkit information (including training videos on PestSmart YouTube Channel) and PestSmart Rabbit Glovebox Guide.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved PestSmart digital resources in place by 18 August 2025. • Evaluate the use of digital resources by 31 December 2025.
	<p>2.2 Work in collaboration with stakeholders where rabbits are destructive on how to support and/or implement land manager engagement and capacity building activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify stakeholders that require support in community capacity building activities by 18 August 2025. • Codesign and support capacity building activities by 31 October 2025. • Measure change in knowledge through pre- and post-surveys to understand the effectiveness of capacity building activities and use evaluation data to inform future approaches by 31 December 2025.
	<p>2.3 Engage and facilitate meetings with industry stakeholders (e.g. Rural R&D corporations, rural suppliers, contractors, bait manufacturing companies) on how to support land managers in adopting best practice integrated rabbit management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify industry stakeholders that require support in community capacity building by 18 August 2025. • Codesign and support capacity building activities by 31 December 2025.

Goal 3

Goal 3 - Build partnerships	Action	Indicators
Connect people to expertise and with other stakeholders working on the rabbit issue. Support land managers to collaborate, build networks and deliver coordinated rabbit management programs.	3.1 Support and build nationwide rabbit management communities of practice.	• Growth in membership and engagement in the Australian Rabbit Managers Network/ State/ Peri-urban Communities of Practice by 31 December 2025.
	3.2 Engage with state and territory governments/land services/Councils to understand rabbit extent and damage, jurisdictional regulations and rules, and discuss the support needed to increase feral rabbit management and reduce the harm caused by rabbits.	• Meetings held with state agencies e.g. Local Land Services/Councils managing feral rabbits, agreed actions identified where National Coordinator could assist and planning underway to resource by 31 December 2025.
	3.3 Facilitate partnership and collaboration opportunities to support the design and/or implementation of feral rabbit management programs at the regional level to reduce rabbit damage.	• Meetings held with rabbit groups/networks/organisations to support the design and/or implementation of a rabbit control plan by 31 December 2025.

Goal 4

Goal 4 – Improve national standards	Action	Indicators
Review and improve the national standards for the effective and humane management of rabbits and their application.	4.1 Coordinate the review of the National Standard Operating Procedures (NATSOPS) and Code of Practice (CoPs), including consultation with relevant parties and put forward for endorsement through government committees.	• Updated national standards agreed to by the Terrestrial Vertebrate Working Group by 18 August 2025.
	4.2 Connect researchers and practitioners, including First Nations Peoples, community, government and industry to encourage the continuous improvement of control tools and the adoption of monitoring and evaluation tools.	• Researchers and practitioners are connected and sharing knowledge by 31 December 2025.

Goal 5

Goal 5 – Protect priority assets	Action	Indicators
Facilitate the prioritisation and resourcing of rabbit management projects to protect important assets.	5.1 Support stakeholders to design and evaluate initiatives that mitigate the impacts of rabbits on priority assets (such as key agricultural, cultural, ecological sites).	• Engage with stakeholders such as managers of Ramsar Sites and encourage and support the design of rabbit management plans by 31 December 2025.
	5.2 Engage with states, territories and partners to explore the need and potential for a national rabbit survey to determine rabbit distribution, density and impacts.	• Engage with the Terrestrial Vertebrate Working Group and partners by 31 December 2025.

Year 2

2026

The focus of the second year is to review and build on Year One to expand the achievements and reach.

The program will continue focusing on the five goals in partnership with governments, industry and community organisations:

1. Raise awareness: Increase community awareness of the damage caused by feral rabbits to the environment, agriculture, cultural heritage and community infrastructure.
2. Increase capacity: Increase capability and adoption of best practice rabbit management by land managers to reduce the damage to the environment, agriculture, cultural heritage and community infrastructure.
3. Build partnerships: Connect people to expertise and with other stakeholders working on the rabbit issue. Support land managers to collaborate, build networks and deliver coordinated rabbit management programs.
4. Improve national standards: Review and improve the national standards for the effective and humane management of rabbits and their application.
5. Protect important assets: Facilitate the prioritisation and resourcing of rabbit management projects to protect important assets.



Year 3

2027

The third year focuses on building upon the previous two years, while enhancing the understanding of rabbit impacts and abundance trends and the number of rabbit management programs designed to address the pest issue.

The program will continue focusing on the five goals in partnership with governments, industry and community organisations:

1. Raise awareness: Increase community awareness of the damage caused by feral rabbits to the environment, agriculture, cultural heritage and community infrastructure.
2. Increase capacity: Increase capability and adoption of best practice rabbit management by land managers to reduce the damage to the environment, agriculture, cultural heritage and community infrastructure.
3. Build partnerships: Connect people to expertise and with other stakeholders working on the rabbit issue. Support land managers to collaborate, build networks and deliver coordinated rabbit management programs.
4. Improve national standards: Review and improve the national standards for the effective and humane management of rabbits and their application.
5. Protect important assets: Facilitate the prioritisation and resourcing of rabbit management projects to protect important assets.





The Centre for Invasive Species Solutions acknowledges the continuing connection of First Nations Peoples to culture, country and community in Australia and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

Contact Us

-  +61 2 6201 2887
-  www.invasives.com.au
-  rabbits@invasives.com.au
-  PO Box 5005, University of Canberra LPO,
University of Canberra ACT 2617



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