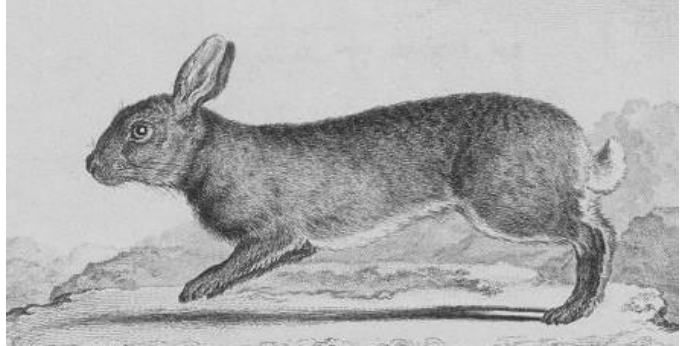




Rabbit Control

Limiting Habitat, Fumigation and Chemical Control

Introduced European rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) kill vegetation and compete with native animals for food and shelter, thus have contributed to the local extinction of many native animal and plant species. Rabbits breed in winter after rain, when there are plenty of fresh green shoots around, which in turn stimulate breeding via plant estrogens. They will produce young in shelters above ground, but have more success in underground warrens. They can breed 3-4 times a year, but in Central Australia usually breed 1-2 times a year, depending on how good a year it is.



Firstly, monitor the rabbit populations to determine density and therefore control method:

- Zero: No sign – No action necessary, other than to monitor for future activity.
- Low density: Some sign, few holes – Limit their habitat.
- Medium density: Active warrens present, scratches, dung heaps, feeding areas – Limit their habitat, bait with Pindone.
- High density: Abundant active warrens, rabbits visible – Limit their habitat, bait with Pindone, fumigate warrens.

Limit Their Habitat

The best way to minimise the impact of rabbits on your block is to remove places where they can hide, and protect plants from browsing. We recommend that you:

- Remove piles of debris such as roofing iron, timber, mounds of dead branches etc. These materials provide a good place for rabbits to hide and protect them while digging holes. Get rid of the rubbish and you may well get rid of the rabbits. Scatter the dead branches around the place to provide habitat for lizards, small birds, etc.
- Block holes underneath buildings to prevent rabbits from living there.
- Look for warrens, and if you find one, block the holes with newspaper (they don't like digging through it) and then cover with dirt.
- Protect plants from rabbits and euros using mesh or plastic tree guards.
- Note that rabbit-proof fencing is not always recommended for the property boundary, as it limits movement of native wildlife (we want to be attracting native wildlife to the property, after all).

Fumigation

Fumigation of rabbit warrens is suitable for controlling rabbits during winter, when there is plenty of food around for rabbits and the warrens are active (potentially with young). Fumigation is successful for controlling the next generation within two months from the time the young are born (before the young become mobile and independent). Fumigation tablets are used to fill the warren with gas that is heavier than air. As such, all burrow entrances must be closed to prevent the escape of rabbits and retreat any new warren openings found.

Fumigation tablets react with water in the soil or atmosphere to produce a gas, which then diffuses through the warren.

Chemical Control

Use a chemical control for rabbits if you wish. For this option, get in touch with the Land for Wildlife team as we can advise and offer support for using oats dosed with Pindone. Pindone is a blood anti-coagulant, causing rabbits to simply run out of energy, and needs to be used with caution. It takes quite a large quantity, and animals can recover fully from a sub-lethal dose.

Rabbits are one of the most susceptible species to the effects of Pindone; however other animals such as birds, cats (feral and domestic) and native mammals may be vulnerable to poisoning. By using a good baiting technique, you can minimise the risk of poisoning by non-target species and maximise rabbit control.

Baiting with Pindone is recommended when alternative feed is scarce and rabbits are under stress – baiting when there is plenty of feed around is likely to be less successful. The bait will not work in rainy weather as the Pindone is soluble and washes off and breaks down.

Pindone can only be bought in 10kg buckets, and as you would only need about half a kilo we recommend members sharing the purchase of a bucket. If you are interested in purchasing some Pindone let us know and we can put you in touch with like-minded members. Please ensure you have read the guidelines for Rabbit control using Pindone poison.

Start with laying some un-poisoned rolled oats on the ground in the area where the rabbits are feeding; it will get them used to eating oats. Hoe a shallow furrow to put the oats into as rabbits are attracted to the turned dirt and will find the oats quicker. Next replace the un-poisoned oats with some anticoagulant oats and put it out for a few days so the rabbits get a good feed. If there are non-target animals around, only put the oats out late in evening and bury them the next morning (push dirt back over the furrow you have made). Rabbits have good noses and will dig for the buried oats once they know to look for it. Be sure to check near warrens in the days following baiting, to ensure that any rabbits can be collected and disposed of (to prevent the rabbits from being consumed by non-target scavengers).

Further Reading

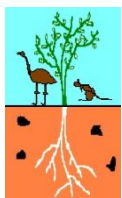
For further information about managing feral animals in the Alice Springs region:

Department of Land Resource Management (2016). Feral Rabbit. <https://nt.gov.au/environment/animals/feral-animals/feral-rabbit>

Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment Tasmania (2014). Pindone – A Poison for Rabbit Control. <http://dpiwwe.tas.gov.au/invasive-species/invasive-animals/invasive-mammals/european-rabbits/pindone>

Sharp, T. & Saunders, G. (2004). Ground Baiting of Rabbits with Pindone. Department of Primary Industries, NSW. <http://www.pestsmart.org.au/ground-baiting-of-rabbits-with-pindone/>

For any further queries, contact the **Alice Springs Town Council Ranger unit** (www.alicesprings.nt.gov.au and Ph 08 8950 0500) or **Land for Wildlife** (lfw@lowecol.com.au or Ph 08 8955 5222). Check out the Land for Wildlife website (wildlife.lowecol.com.au) for more fact sheets regarding rabbit control and other feral animals.



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