

Yorke district summer rabbit control

Landholders and community groups are being encouraged to start planning their summer rabbit control, as the weather begins to heat up and green feed dries out.

Natural Resources Northern and Yorke Landscapes Ranger Janet Moore said while the damage rabbits cause is most visible in spring when the population is at its peak, summer is when rabbits are at their most vulnerable.

"Baiting rabbits during the summer months presents the best opportunity to reduce breeding stock for the next season because there is little else for rabbits to eat, which increases the likelihood of high bait uptake," Ms Moore said.

"Despite the lack of alternative feed for rabbits, anyone undertaking rabbit baiting should prime the rabbits to eat the bait by providing at least three bait free feeds, to avoid the risk of poor bait uptake, and bait shy rabbits on your property.

"While baiting is a highly effective method to reduce rabbit numbers, to really control the population, other control measures, such as warren ripping, are necessary."

An integrated rabbit control program should focus on the destruction and removal of warren systems and shelter, as this significantly impacts the ability of rabbits to breed and rebound; simply laying bait will not work in isolation.

Ms Moore said rabbits that survive the summer months will quickly begin to breed once the season breaks.

The introduction of the European rabbit has had a profound impact on agricultural production and biodiversity in Australia, including much of the Northern and Yorke region.

These impacts include soil erosion, crop and pasture losses and the destruction of valuable native vegetation and habitat for native wildlife.

The Korean strain of the RHD Virus (RHDV1-K5), which has been released at a number of sites across the Yorke District over the last 18 months, has successfully reduced rabbit numbers, however the virus alone is not enough to prevent rabbits rebounding in the next year.

Yorke District landholders and community groups will be able to purchase pre-made rabbit bait at a subsidised rate from participating rural agricultural supply stores from November through to February.

The summer rabbit bait program is funded by the Northern and Yorke NRM levy.

For details of participating rural supply stores, please contact Natural Resources Northern and Yorke on 8841 3400. For more information about European rabbits and the control program, visit <http://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/northernandyorke>.

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