

RABBIT IMPACTS AND MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

Further information for land owners



Rabbit impacts and management requirements

Rabbits damage vegetation, impact biodiversity, and cause soil instability through burrowing. Controlling rabbits helps protect the environment and property.

Under the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (CALP Act), all landowners are legally required to take all reasonable steps to prevent the spread of, and as far as possible eradicate, rabbits from their land.

Rabbit populations in Casey

Rabbit numbers have been increasing across Australia in recent years. This is likely due to a combination of factors, including developing resistance to biological controls and several wetter years that have increased food availability, allowing populations to recover and expand.

In addition, large areas of Casey provide favourable conditions for rabbits. Sandy soils make it easy to dig warrens, and the mix of urban and semi-rural land, along with ongoing land use changes, supports their establishment and spread. Urban environments further complicate control efforts, as options are often limited due to the need to minimise risks to pets, people, and native wildlife.

In addition, past success in reducing rabbit numbers through biological control has led to reduced community awareness over time, resulting in fewer resources and less coordinated effort being directed towards ongoing rabbit management. This may also contribute to confusion around responsibility for rabbit control, leading to inconsistent management across neighbouring properties.

Eradication and long-term management

Rabbits are unlikely to be completely eradicated across Casey due to their high breeding rate, ability to spread quickly, and the availability of suitable habitat. Eradication is generally only achievable in small, enclosed areas where re-invasion can be prevented.

In most situations, the goal is to reduce rabbit numbers and minimise their impacts rather than eliminate them entirely. Long-term success depends on ongoing management and a coordinated approach across multiple properties.

Significant reductions in rabbit populations can be achieved when landowners work together using best-practice control methods.

Contact the City of Casey:

Web: casey.vic.gov.au
Email: caseycc@casey.vic.gov.au
Phone: 03 9705 5200
Post: PO Box 1000, Narre Warren VIC 3805
NRS: 133 677 (for the deaf, hearing or speech impaired)

Customer Service Centres:

Narre Warren: Bunjil Place, Patrick Northeast Drive, Narre Warren
Cranbourne: Cranbourne Park Shopping Centre, Cranbourne
ABN: 43 320 295 742



Height:

The fence should be at least 900 mm high above ground to prevent rabbits from jumping over

Buried depth or skirt:

Rabbits are strong diggers, so fencing must either:

- Be buried at least 150–200 mm below ground, or
- Include a skirt (apron) laid along the ground and pegged down to stop digging underneath

Mesh size:

Use wire mesh with openings no greater than 40 mm to prevent rabbits squeezing through

Materials:

Use sturdy materials such as galvanised wire mesh—plastic fencing is not recommended as rabbits can chew through it

Maintenance:

Regularly inspect fences for gaps, holes, or damage, particularly around gates, corners, and low points, as these are common entry points

Temporary fencing can be utilised to allow plants and gardens to establish for much lower cost than permanent fencing. Once established, plants are much less susceptible to rabbit browsing.

Learn more about rabbit-proof fencing:

- [Victorian Rabbit Action Network \(VRAN\)](#)
- [PestSmart](#)
- [Agriculture Victoria](#)

Managing rabbit warrens on your property

Effective rabbit control requires a planned and ongoing approach. Simply removing rabbits will not solve the problem long-term. If warrens remain, rabbit populations can quickly recover. The most successful outcomes come from using the right methods at the right time, and where possible, coordinating efforts with neighbouring properties.

Key actions you can take include:

- Learn about best-practice rabbit management by referring to trusted resources such as Agriculture Victoria, PestSmart, and the Victorian Rabbit Action Network (VRAN)
- Seek advice from a pest control professional to identify the most appropriate control methods for your property
- Remove rabbits from active warrens, followed by destroying and collapsing the warren (for example, through fumigation and/or mechanical ripping) to prevent reuse
- Undertake preventative measures, including removing rabbit harbour (such as debris, dense vegetation, or shelter)
- Install rabbit-proof fencing to protect key areas and reduce reinvasion

Taking an integrated, well-planned approach will greatly improve the effectiveness of rabbit control on your property.

Rabbit management in urban areas

Urban areas present unique challenges for rabbit control. Options such as baiting and shooting are generally not suitable due to safety risks to people, pets, and native wildlife. As a result, control focuses on prevention, habitat management, and community coordination.

Residents can still play an important role by taking simple, effective actions:

- Control rabbits on your property by removing shelter and discouraging activity
- Remove harbour such as wood piles, dense vegetation, and debris where rabbits can hide
- Protect your plants using tree guards or similar
- Install rabbit-proof fencing (including buried mesh to prevent digging underneath)
- Block access to areas under sheds, decks, and structures
- Alert your neighbours to their responsibilities under the Catchment and Land Protection Act
- Report rabbit warrens or harbour on nearby Council or public land
- Work with your local community, including Landcare or Friends groups, to support coordinated action
- Map rabbit presence and rabbit burrows on the Feral Scan website
- Join a local Landcare network or Friends group

In urban areas, focusing on protecting assets and reducing rabbit harbour is often the most practical and effective approach.

Rabbit management in rural landscapes

Rural and larger properties provide more opportunities for effective rabbit control, as a wider range of tools can be safely and legally used. This allows landowners to implement a full integrated rabbit management approach.

Landowners should aim to combine multiple control methods for the best results:

- Fumigate active burrows to remove rabbits within warrens. Note: An Agricultural Chemical User Permit (ACUP) is required to undertake fumigation using restricted chemicals.
- Destroy warrens to prevent rabbits from breeding. Heavy machinery, such as a large excavator with a ripper attachment is the most effective method for permanently collapsing warren systems.
- Undertake baiting programs where appropriate and permitted. Baiting requires strict compliance with regulations, including holding an ACUP and, where using 1080 bait, the appropriate chemical endorsement and adherence to label directions and buffer requirements. Baiting must be carefully planned to minimise risks to pets, livestock, and native wildlife, including threatened species such as the Southern Brown Bandicoot.
- Shooting is most effective after rabbit numbers have been significantly reduced through other methods and is used to manage the remaining animals. It is not effective as a stand-alone control measure.
- Remove harbour such as fallen timber, blackberry, and dense scrub.
- Monitor for new activity and undertake follow-up control to prevent reinfestation.

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- Work with neighbours to undertake coordinated, landscape-scale control. Rabbits will quickly reinvade from nearby properties if control is not coordinated.
- Seek advice and support from your local Landcare or Friends group, pest controllers, or Agriculture Victoria.
- Map rabbit presence and rabbit burrows on Feral Scan website.

On larger properties, the key to success is using multiple tools together, at the right time, and across a wider area. This significantly improves long-term outcomes and reduces reinfestation.