

# When rabbits were more pest than pet



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## Enviro-Stories

Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeeKdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area.

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# When rabbits were more pest than pet

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A young boy named Theodore walked with his father across the family farm. Theodore loved the country life and was always interested in finding out more about their property. He asked his dad a question, "Dad, why are our fences so tall and why do they go so far into the ground?"

His father told Theodore the story...



This farm has been in our family for generations. Those fences date back to around the year 1900. That's when your Great-great-grandfather William ran a flourishing veggie farm with his positive wife Grace and their 10 year-old twins, Alice and Edward.



Back then the market for fresh veggies was huge. Things had been going really well and the farm was very profitable for William and his family. But as we all know on the land nothing lasts forever.





One Wednesday evening when William was eating dinner with his family, he opened that day's post. It informed him that rabbits had become a widespread pest after being brought in with the first fleet and they were now heading towards their area in plague proportions.



William ate uneasily as he contemplated the news he had just gotten. What would be the effect of rabbits on the local environment? Would the native animals be able to cope? And most importantly, what would happen to his vegetables on the farm?





William went about his chores as usual until one day, he saw a pair of rabbits hop across the road in front of him. His heart stopped and he thought to himself, "Oh no! It's started!"



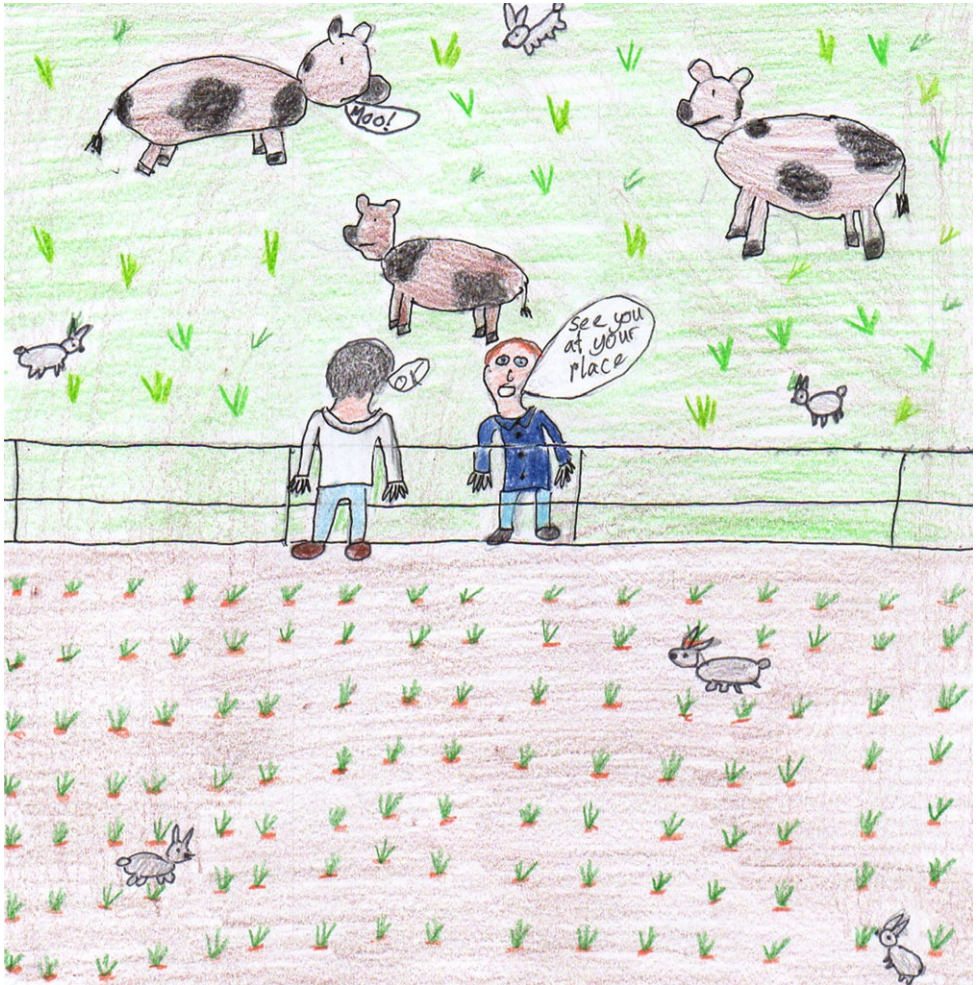


Over the following weeks his family saw more and more rabbits invade the farm. There was never a good thing to say about them.

“They eat the native plants and kill the trees by gnawing off their bark!” grumbled Edward.

“They take food and water away from the native animals!” whined Alice.

“And they eat and dig up all our veggies!” complained William.



William knew that something had to be done, so he talked to his neighbour Jeff, who had similar problems.

Jeff was happy to have a meeting with him because he owned a livestock farm and the rabbits ate the grass that the cows would normally eat. They decided to meet that very afternoon at William's place.





Three hours later the two friends could still be seen brainstorming ideas to stop the damage to their farms caused by the rabbits.

After another hour they had a fair list of actions they could take, including:

- Building rabbit proof fences
- Destroying rabbit warrens (interlocking networks of rabbit burrows)
- Hiring a professional rifleman



Jeff yawned. He was growing tired and thought they had plenty of ideas so he left William to have a nice meal with his family.

That night William had the best sleep, he had had in ages, knowing that tomorrow he would take action against those fuzzy invaders!





William awoke bright and early aware that he had a big day ahead of him. Firstly he went into town and purchased supplies for a rabbit proof fence. Then visited a professional shooter, who told him he would go to William's farm in a week to shoot the rabbits.

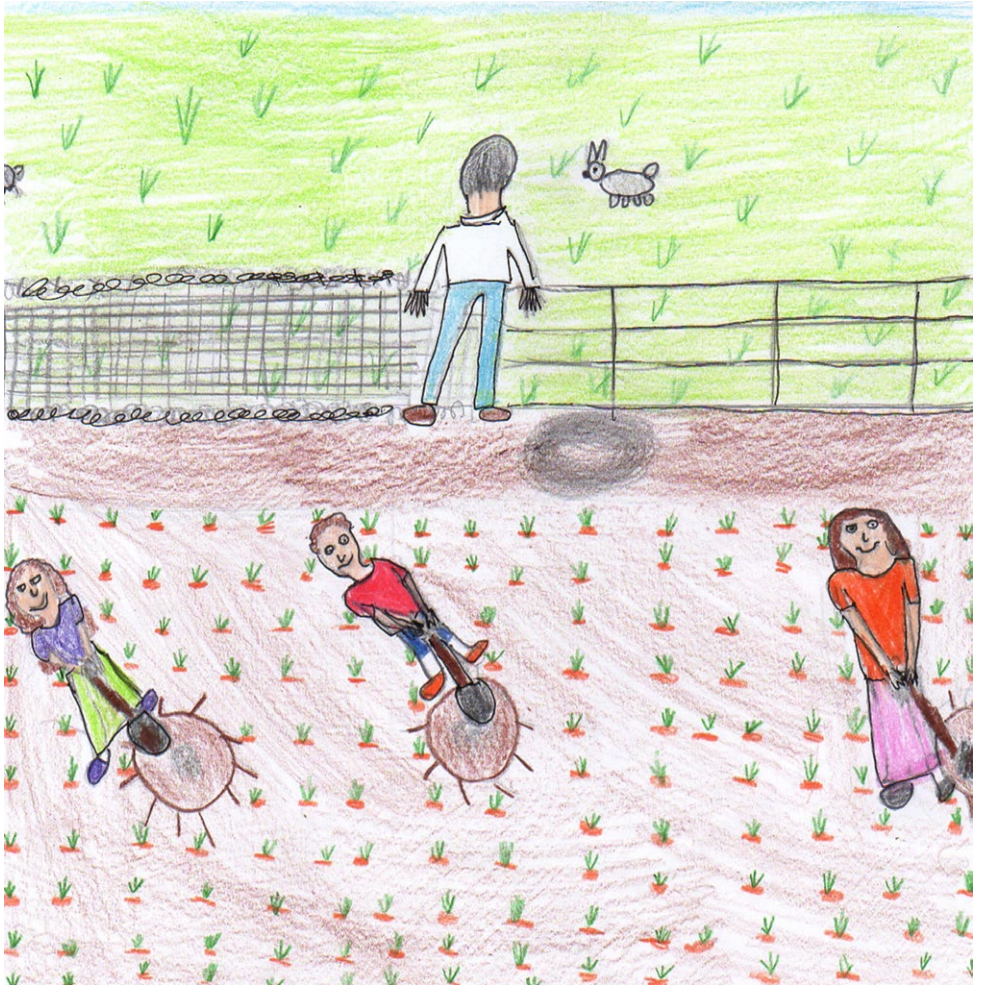




William rushed home and told his family to dig up and destroy all the rabbit warrens. He gave Grace, Alice and Edward shovels and hoes and set them to work.

William grabbed his supplies and began building rabbit proof fences.





The next couple of days were some of the families busiest ever. Grace, Edward and Alice destroyed dozens of rabbit warrens, while William built fences that were higher and deeper than the original ones. This made it impossible for the rabbits to burrow under or jump over the fence.



Eventually the day that the shooter was to come arrived. The shooter's name was Ralph. William told Ralph that he was to shoot to instantly kill the rabbits. Then he and his family went inside. William hated the sound of gunfire, but he knew that his actions were necessary.





After lots of hard work William and his family walked out onto their porch and looked out over the veggie farm they held so close to their hearts. William heaved a big sigh of relief as there was not a rabbit in sight.

115 years later...

"So, because your Great-great-grandfather, William took action and stopped an invasion of rabbits he saved the farm. Without his quick thinking we would not be able to produce all our lovely veggies that we do today," answered Theodore's father.









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