

Hop into a Rabbit Proof Future



Aydan Matthews, Leilani Smith,
Taryn Gardam and Sophie Perrin

Deniliquin South Public School



Creative Catchment Kids

Creative Catchment Kids is an initiative of Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between our funding partners and school students by providing opportunities for positive and authentic ventures that encourage students to develop creative solutions to agriculture and natural resource management issues.

www.wirraminna.org/creative-catchment-kids/

Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre

The Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre is located in Burrumbuttock, north of Albury in southern NSW. Since 1995, the centre, which is adjacent to Burrumbuttock Public School, has provided opportunities for discovery and learning about the natural environment, the ecology of the local woodlands and the beauty of native plants.

www.wirraminna.org

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.

www.envirostories.com.au

Hop into a Rabbit Proof Future

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School: Deniliquin South Public School

Local Land Heroes - Securing Our Region

In 2015, students involved in the Creative Catchment Kids program researched and wrote stories about their 'Local Land Heroes' who are involved in pest management in the Murray and Murrumbidgee regions. These heroes are local individuals, couples, a business or industries that have made a difference in their local community by contributing to the management of pest animals and plants. The program was generously funded by Murray Local Land Services and Riverina Local Land Services.

Local Land Heroes is part of Enviro-Stories, a PeekDesigns education program.



Local Land
Services



Australian Government



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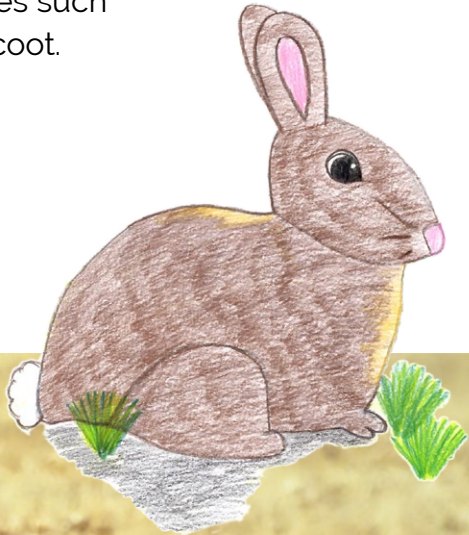


All About Mick

Mick Lalor was born in Canada and moved to Melbourne before he turned one. He has lived in many places in New South Wales before becoming a ranger for National Parks and Wildlife in Moama, New South Wales. Mick's responsibilities include developing and implementing programs which control rabbit population in areas stretching from Albury to Hay. Mick worked for State Forests from 1996 until 2010.

Why are rabbits a pest?

Rabbits cause destruction to the native vegetation by grazing and burrowing, which in some cases has led to the extinction of native plant species. The loss of vegetation results in poor soil quality, impacting on farming and agriculture. Rabbits compete for food sources with native animals and livestock and have played a role in the demise of native marsupial species such as the bilby and bandicoot.



Rabbit history in Australia

The domesticated rabbit was introduced to Australia by the early settlers as a source of meat. In 1859, Thomas Austin released 24 rabbits on a property near Geelong, Victoria for hunting purposes. By 1900, the rabbit population had stretched as far as the Northern Territory and Western Australia.





Overview of control mechanisms

There are several methods which are used by Mick to control rabbit populations. These include baiting (carrot dropper), the rodenator, fencing, fumigation (poisonous pellets) and in some cases, ripping. The initiation of a rabbit control program is based on a number of factors including river height, rain fall and breeding season. Fumigation is a method preferred by Aboriginal people in areas such as burial sights as the ground is not disturbed.

Carrot Dropper

The 'Carrot Dropper' is a baitlayer device. The 'Carrot Dropper' is towed behind a vehicle and distributes carrots out onto the sand hills and near rabbit warrens. In some cases, baits which are not poisonous are laid before the poisonous baits, in an attempt to attract the rabbits to eat. The poisonous baits are sprayed with 10 80 poison which will poison rabbits when they eat them.



The Rodenator

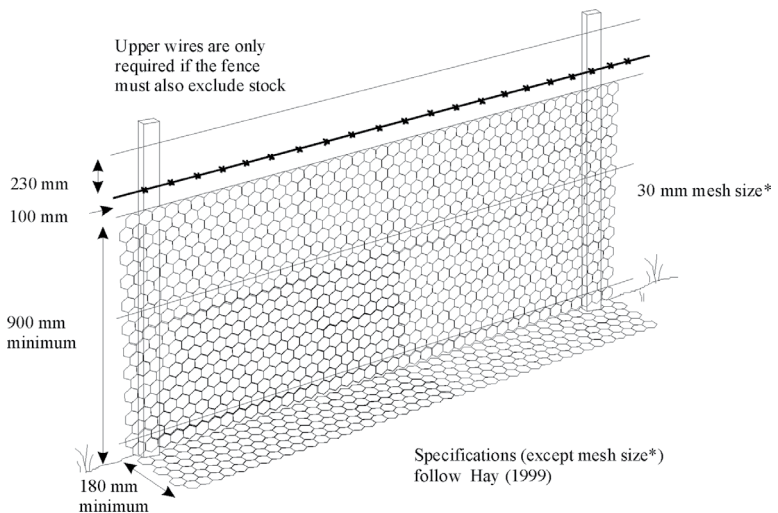
The Rodenator blows air into the burrows followed by a short puff of gas, blowing up the burrows and killing anything inside. Use of the rodenator destroys rabbit populations and will often collapse burrows.



Fencing

Rabbit-proof netting fences are very expensive to construct, but provide a mostly permanent exclusion of rabbits from areas of much-needed crops and plantings. Extra time and expense are required to bury netting and rabbit-proof stays and gateways. When stressed, rabbits will climb over or dig under the best netting fences, so regular checks and maintenance will be needed to keep the fence usable.

Rabbit netting fence



Long, K. and Robley, A. 2004. **Catalogue of fence designs**. Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research, Victoria. www.pestsmart.org.au/catalogue-of-fence-designs/

Fumigation

Fumigation can be very effective for controlling rabbits where other methods are unsuitable, such as in aboriginal burial sites. Fumigants are used to fill the warren with gas that is heavier than air. All burrow entrances must be closed to prevent the escape of rabbits. When using fumigation it is important to check treated warrens soon afterwards for new openings of burrows, and re-treat these.



Images courtesy of PestSmart www.pestsmart.org.au



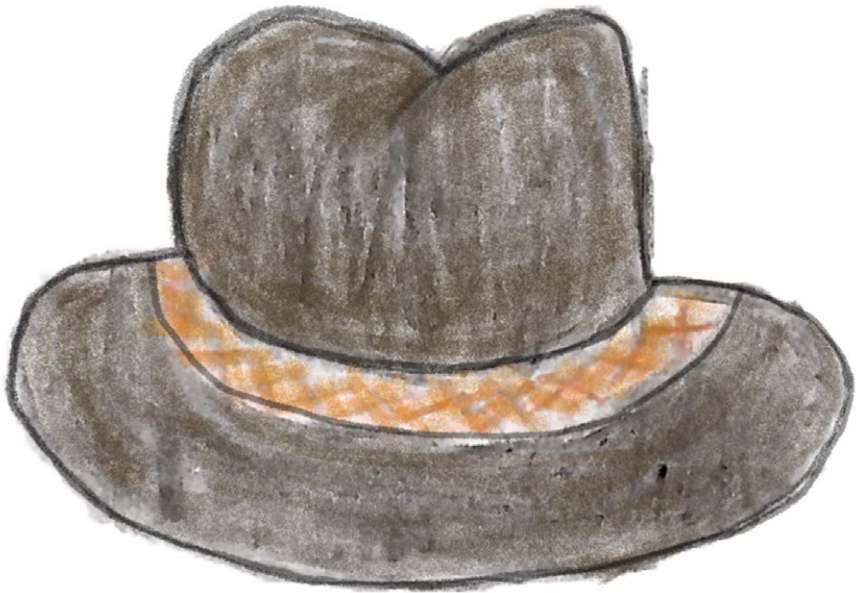
Figure 1: Tunnel rabbit shed with cooling system.



Figure 2: Rabbit cages in tunnel shed.

Production of rabbits for meat

Rabbits are farmed in Australia due to the demand for their meat as a gourmet food in restaurants. Farming meat rabbits provides an economic option for many small and hobby farmers who are limited by land area. Farming rabbits for meat can start with as little 5-10 does and two bucks.



Production of rabbits for Akubra hats

Every Akubra hat is made from pure rabbit fur felt and depending on the style, anywhere from 10 to 14 rabbit skins are used to make an individual hat. Fur felt is the strongest natural fabric produced, as the individual fibres are tightly interlocked in production to form a dense, tough matrix. This is what makes Akubra hats so durable.



Interesting Fun Facts

- Rabbit tails and rabbit feet are considered good luck.
- Occasionally you may find rabbits and foxes living together.
- Rabbits might have three entries to their home but only use one of them and the rest are emergency exits.
- Scat is another word for droppings.
- The RSPCA replaced steel teeth rabbit traps with rubber teeth traps.



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2015 Year 6, Deniliquin South Public School

CONGRATULATIONS

Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre and the Creative Catchment Kids Program won the 2015 NSW Junior Landcare Team Award and will be competing in the 2016 National Landcare Awards.



Local Land Services

