PESTSMART

Boosting rabbit biocontrol:
RHDV K5 national release - how you can get involved

Australian governments and industry have joined forces to boost rabbit biocontrol effectiveness in Australia. This has led to a naturally occurring RHDV variant from Korea (RHDV K5) being selected as the proposed next biocontrol agent to be released in Australia. It is currently under assessment by government regulators.

The national release will be coordinated by the Invasive Plants and Animals Committee in consultation with Australian Wool Innovation and Meat and Livestock Australia.

How you can get involved as a monitoring release site

1. Contact your neighbours

The project team is looking for groups of landholders. If you are a landholder wanting to be a release site, the first step should be to contact your neighbours. You can use existing groups for this process, such as your local Landcare group, Catchment Management Authority, Local Land Services or other Natural Resource Management group in your area.

It is important to note that different jurisdictions have different regulations around handling and releasing the virus and you will need to make sure your group contains an authorised person to do this. For example in NSW, this would be your local land services (LLS) officer.

2. Identify a group coordinator

Once you have your group, it is important to identify one person as the group coordinator. Where an existing group has been used, it may be best to use the existing group coordinator (LLS ranger, CMA officer etc). This person will be the point of contact with the project team and will be responsible for collating group data and samples.

Image: Rick Nash

3. Determine what type of site you want to be

There are two types of sites: **Release sites** and **Broad-scale sites**. Any site can be a Release site, however there are some minimum requirements for Broad-scale sites.

Broad-scale sites: undertake a three-night spotlight count with a vehicle using standard methods. The transect must be a minimum of 1km and cover at least 25% of the site where release is to take place (such as the paddock). Samples also need to be taken from 20 shot rabbits prior to release.

Release sites: undertake some form of assessment of their rabbit population prior to release (eg spotlight count (walked or driven), dung count). No shot samples are required and there are no minimum site requirements.

All sites are required to collect dead rabbits (where possible) after the release of K5 and redo their rabbit population assessment in the same manner four weeks after the release. There can be a mix of both Release and Broad-scale sites within the one group.

4. Contact the project team

Once your group is coordinated and the site types determined, the group coordinator should register your interest with the project team by filling out the following form:

www.pestsmart.org.au/get-involved-as-a-monitoring-site/

Invasive Animals CRC

NSW GOVERNMENT Department of Primary Industries

awi Australian Wool Innovation Limited

mla MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA

RHDV K5 release indicative timeline:

Please note that these dates are indicative only and may change depending on regulatory approvals

- When does the Expression of Interest period close? *31 May 2016*
- When will sites be selected? *mid 2016*
- When do I undertake pre-release sampling? *To be confirmed*
- When do I undertake post-release sampling? *4 weeks after you release the virus (dates to be confirmed)*
- How much land will 1 vial treat? *150ha (10kg of carrot)*

RabbitScan: get involved in monitoring

RabbitScan is a web-mapping system for landholders to record rabbit activity in their local area.

- Record sightings, warrens, dung heaps, impacts, and control activities (such as baiting or warren ripping).
- Join or create a landholder group online to keep your members informed about current rabbit problems, and work together.
- Receive updates about rabbit activity and local control programs.
- Use data recorded in your region to help decide where to undertake rabbit control.

RabbitScan also contains many resources and links to many groups. You can also download the Apps onto your phone.

Visit – *www.rabbitscan.org.au*

Download the FeralScan Pest Mapping Mobile App for iOS or Android

www.pestsmart.org.au

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