

**FOUNDATION FOR
RABBIT-FREE AUSTRALIA INC.**

STRATEGIC PLAN

2005-2010

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Strategic Plan, 2005-2010

Introduction

The Foundation for Rabbit-Free Australia (RFA) is Australia's only publicly-subscribed fund that focuses its activities on the means to eradicate Australia of continuing impacts wrought by the wild European rabbit on our primary industries and our dwindling biodiversity. The primary aims of RFA are to:

- a) Support research, development and extension contributing to the eradication of rabbits in Australia.
- b) Increase government and community awareness of the continuing threat of rabbits to Australia's economic, environmental and social values.
- c) Encourage and support adoption of rabbit control in integrated natural resource management strategies.

RFA seeks to liaise with the three spheres of government, industry, environmental and community agencies/groups to achieve its planned outcomes as set out in this strategic plan.

Context

RFA continues to be greatly concerned with the national decline in rabbit research and development effort and on-ground control, particularly following the success of Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD – formerly known as calicivirus) during the 1990s. We believe that the large economic, environmental and social gains made with RHD across Australia's rabbit-affected lands are inadequately acknowledged and are being eroded by lack of appreciation of the continuing threat and accompanying complacency.

RFA also recognises that RHD has not effectively reduced rabbit numbers in higher-rainfall regions of Australia and that the reasons for this situation are not well understood through lack of research effort. In addition, it is inevitable that either rabbit populations or RHD will adapt to their new situation, with the result that rabbit numbers will increase once again, as they did in the 1960s following myxomatosis.

RFA notes that an investment of less than \$5m in RHD, as the second form of biological control for rabbits, and related research in Australia and New Zealand netted an accountable benefit of well over \$100m. This high return on investment excludes the unaccounted biodiversity and social benefits.

Current estimates conservatively value the annual national cost of the exotic European rabbit at \$113m, not including the uncosted high levels of damage to the environment and the social cost — even with low numbers of rabbits post-RHD. This introduced and highly competitive species does not have a place in our landscape and will continue contributing to attenuation to landscape quality without continuing research and control effort.

Rationale for this Strategic Plan, 2005-2010

This Strategic Plan provides directions for the activities and desired achievements of RFA for the next five years. The Plan will be reviewed at least every two years to ensure that RFA's efforts are contemporary and outcome oriented.

Strategic Plan — 2005-2010

Purpose:

Provide a specific focus and support the need for innovative, Australia-wide rabbit control research, development and extension, leading to adoption of acceptable control strategies for a rabbit-free Australia.

Goals:

1. Improved rabbit control R,D& E, regionally and nationally, by identifying priorities and by supporting and contributing ideas and funding to R,D& E programs, where feasible.

Outcomes:

- Independent and informed research advice, needs and program reviews provided for rabbit R,D&E agencies and funding corporations.
 - Rabbit workshops/seminars initiated, facilitated and/or funded.
 - Increased awareness of the need for research on new biological control agents.
2. Increased industry, government and community awareness of the continuing threat of rabbits to economic, environmental and social values.

Outcomes:

- Key audiences for awareness programs identified and targeted.
 - Invited specialist journalists funded to prepare high impact rabbit stories for submission to the most effective communication vehicle.
 - An informative and up-to-date website maintained.
 - An independent voice and commentary provided, where needed.
 - Haigh's Easter Bilby Weekend supported.
3. Rabbit control included in existing and new integrated natural resource management strategies.

Outcomes:

- Submissions forwarded to national and state government INRM policies and inquiries, where needed.
- Land managers encouraged to adopt effective rabbit control.
- Government agencies and public/private land managers encouraged to retain and provide rabbit management capacity.

4. Increased rabbit R,D& E capacity in Australia provided through appropriate tertiary training.

Outcomes:

- Acknowledgement by tertiary institutions of the need for trained rabbit researchers and information providers.
- Post-graduate students provided with grant funding by RFA.
- Supervisors suggested by RFA for post-graduate students involved in rabbit research.

5. Funds raised to support RFA's primary aims by increasing the numbers of members and sponsors.

Outcomes:

- Numbers of private and corporate members increased.
- Number of sponsors increased.
- RFA funds enhanced by targeted shares investment.

November 2005