



Rabbits are banned as pets
Wild rabbits are declared pests

Darling Downs-Moreton
Rabbit Board



Introduction

Rabbits destroy the environment - the cost to Australia's economy exceeds \$600 million per annum.

The rabbit is Australia's most destructive introduced pest and in Queensland it is the most common **illegally** kept pet.

The rabbit (all varieties, including domestic breeds) is a declared pest animal under the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002.

Under this Act it is the responsibility of landowners to take all reasonable steps to keep their properties free of rabbits.

Introducing and selling rabbits in Queensland is not permitted and penalties apply. Limited numbers of permits for domestic rabbits are only available from Biosecurity Queensland for research purposes, public display, magic acts or circuses. Before a permit is granted a number of guidelines need to be fulfilled.

It is an offence to keep a rabbit of any variety as a pet.

Wild rabbits threaten the survival of rare and endangered species of wildlife and destroy many of our native plants. Overgrazing by rabbits removes the plant cover and contributes to soil erosion.

Rabbits eat newly sown seedlings and can ringbark 2.5 metre to 3.5 metre high shrubs.

Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Fence

The Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Fence extends for 555 kilometres from Lamington National Park in the east to Goombi in the south-west of the state, where it connects to the Wild Dog Barrier Fence.

The rabbit fence is designed to prevent the spread of rabbits from southern and western areas into protected areas of the Darling Downs, the Lockyer Valley and South East Queensland.

The fence is managed by the Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board (DDMRB). The DDMRB is funded by eight local governments in areas protected by the fence at a cost of approximately \$1.6 million annually.



The history of the rabbit fence in Queensland is linked to the northward invasion of rabbits in the 1880s. Domestic rabbits were brought to Australia with the First Fleet. Wild rabbits were deliberately released in Victoria in 1859 and quickly spread throughout Victoria and New South Wales, reaching south-western Queensland in the 1880s.

The Darling Downs–Moreton Rabbit Board Fence protects some of the state's most productive agricultural land from the devastation caused by rabbits.

Over the past few years, small populations of rabbits have established in several Logan suburbs.

Recently breeding colonies of rabbits have been discovered under old sheds, abandoned car bodies, shipping containers and piles of rubbish.

The range of rabbit control options available to the urban land owner is currently very limited.

Control procedures widely used in rural areas, such as the use of 1080 poison and opportunistic shooting are not acceptable in urban areas.

Domestic Rabbits

To ensure you do not receive a massive fine, **(the current maximum penalty is \$44,000.00)** domestic rabbits should be surrendered to the Animal Management Centre (213 Queens Road, Kingston 4114).

Six Steps to Successful Wild Rabbit Management

It is important to accurately assess the extent of the rabbit population on your property to be able to design and implement an effective rabbit management program.

1. Inspection of your property

The majority of rabbit activity is highly visible. An initial inspection will identify the areas providing suitable habitat for rabbit colonies. Note the areas with fresh rabbit scats, recently excavated patches of soil and well-worn trails into harbourage areas or under fencing.



If you find evidence of rabbits on your property, it is important that you liaise with your adjoining property owners to discuss possible rabbit activity beyond your property. A comprehensive and co-operative community wide approach needs to be implemented to eradicate rabbits, especially in areas made up of small acreage properties.

2. Destruction of rabbit habitat

The most effective method of controlling rabbits is the destruction of their harbourage areas and warrens. If the existing warren systems are left intact, rabbits will quickly re-colonise.

When rabbits are found under disused sheds and buildings one way to eradicate them is to remove the flooring to gain access to the burrows.

Temporary fencing to enclose the sheds and trapping rabbits is another option often used. Landholders then need to prevent rabbits getting back under the sheds (e.g. wire netting or corrugated iron dug into the ground around the perimeter).

All nearby piles of rubbish need to be removed as these piles provide rabbits with safe, alternative habitats.

DDMRB recommends removing or burning of rubbish piles. A 'Permit to Light a Fire' is required for fires piles larger than 2 m x 2 m. Permits can be obtained from the local fire warden, found on the Qld Rural Fire Service (QRFS) web page. (<https://www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au>)





Examples of wild rabbit harbourage - rubbish piles and old disused buildings

3. Live capture trapping

While live capture trapping of rabbits can be time consuming, it is an acceptable method in the urban environment.

Drop door cage trap

The drop door cage trap is best suited for covered areas e.g. inside of barns and under floorboards or disused sheds. Initially, food favoured by rabbits is placed where rabbits normally feed.

The rabbits are fed diced raw carrots for several days. Other vegetables may work including pungent ones like broccoli. Traps need to be disabled and left open for 2 or 3 nights with bait leading into the cage. This entices the rabbits to enter. Persistence is required.



A drop door cage trap



Note: it is illegal to release a captured rabbit - all captured rabbits must be humanely euthanased.

4. Exclusion fencing

Exclusion fencing is an effective method of preventing rabbits from entering the property. The recommended wire mesh is 50mm and the exclusion fencing should be a minimum height of one metre.

The mesh should be buried into the earth, to a depth of at least 300mm to prevent rabbits burrowing under the fence.

Due to the cost, this may not be a practical option for larger acreage properties.

Fencing can also be used to isolate rabbit harbourage to assist with cage trapping.

5. Regular inspections of your property

A monthly inspection of the property, for evidence of rabbit activity, is recommended. Two methods are suggested:

- A daytime visual inspection - for fresh rabbit scats, diggings and holes in or under perimeter fencing
- A nocturnal inspection with a spotlight or powerful torch to look for feeding rabbits

6. Further advice

If further advice is required, please contact the **Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board** on **07 4661 4076**, or via email to ddmrbrd@bigpond.com or at www.ddmrb.org.au.



7. Amazing Rabbit Breeding Facts

- Rabbits breed from 3-4 months of age.
- Rabbits are pregnant for 30 days and give birth to litters of 4-7 young.
- A mature female rabbit can be continuously pregnant for between 6-8 months per year under favourable conditions.
- A single pair of rabbits can produce 30-40 young per year.

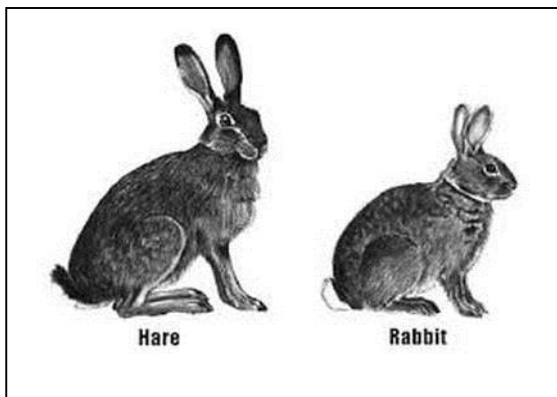
What is the difference between a rabbit and a hare?

A hare is larger, has longer and black tipped ears, and is less social than a rabbit. Rabbits typically hold their tail up when hopping away so a white tail 'flash' is commonly seen. In contrast, hares tend to hold their tail down when moving so the white tail is not obvious.

Hares live completely aboveground, lacking the normal burrow or warren system of rabbits. Therefore, there is none of the environmental damage associated with the erosion or undermining of foundations caused by rabbits.

Hares generally have smaller litters and not as often and they do not spread as rapidly as rabbits and are not found in such high densities.

Hares are an introduced species but not a declared pest animal. There is no legal obligation upon landholders to control hares.





**Logan City Council in conjunction with the
Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board**

