

MEDIA RELEASE

‘Eat the Invaders’. An interesting idea, but it won’t work.

‘It’s an interesting idea, and good to see rabbits being recognised as the pest that they are - but eating our way through feral pests is not going to work’, said Craig Magnussen, Chair of Foundation for Rabbit-Free Australia.

‘History shows that when Australia did have a commercial rabbit-meat industry, demand (even including international export) could never go close to the potential supply of wild rabbits. It also shows that businesses dependant on wild rabbits will do what they can to inhibit the control of the pests, like the release of new biocontrols.’

‘*Those Wild Rabbits. How they shaped Australia*’, a book by Bruce Munday, details the full story of rabbit commercialisation in Australia. It is a history we don’t want to repeat’, he said.

‘The only significant historic success has come from biological controls; myxomatosis and calicivirus – and both are the direct outcome of years of dedicated research,’ said Mr Magnussen. ‘Those breakthroughs resulted in a false sense of security. We now need to revitalise our efforts in rabbit control across the nation – from cities to the outback’.

Rabbits have profound effect on the environment even when in low numbers. ‘Just a few’ rabbits will target palatable species and prevent their regeneration, wiping generations of regrowth from plant communities. In higher numbers they compete with native herbivores for food and sustain populations of feral cats and foxes, increasing predation of native animals and stock.

‘The mere presence of rabbits triggers system-wide changes in the environment – all for the worse’, said Mr Magnussen.

Foundation for Rabbit-Free Australia believes that more research into additional forms of bio-control is needed, especially given the long lead time of such work, along with more assistance to land managers in the application of traditional control measures.

‘Even with additional bio-controls we are likely to always need traditional rabbit control, and we certainly do right now, but we need training, support with access to equipment and guidance in planning effective control programs to get managers engaged’.

‘The best whole-of-landscape solutions will come when governments work with communities to combat weeds and pests collectively, regardless of land ownership, because pests don’t stop at property boundaries’, said Mr Magnussen.

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Benefits of Rabbit Control: Please see overpage.



Benefits of rabbit control

