



8 February 2017

### **National release to control wild rabbits**

The Western Suburbs Regional Organisation of Councils (WESROC) has been selected to participate in a national release of a new strain of rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus (calicivirus) called RHDV1 K5.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority spent 18 months assessing the application for registration of RHDV1 K5 before approving it for release in mid-2016.

Nearly 1000 landholders and community groups in Australia have registered to be involved in the release of the new strain which is anticipated to help control rabbit numbers across Australia.

The release is supported by the Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA) who advocate for an integrated pest management approach, i.e. integrating a number of different control approaches targeting multiple pest species at the same time.

RHDV1 K5 is a variant of the strain of RHDV1 already used in Australia. RHDV1 K5 is a Korean strain of the calicivirus and is not a new virus. There is a vaccine (Cylap®) for prevention of RHDV1 disease that has been available in Australia since 1996.

Prior to registering RHDV1 K5 for use in wild rabbit control, a NSW Department of Primary Industries pilot study through the Invasive Animals CRC examined the vaccine for suitability in protecting domestic and production rabbits from RHDV1 K5. This experiment compared the mortality of a small number of vaccinated and unvaccinated rabbits that were subsequently infected with a high dose of RHDV1 K5.

All of the rabbits vaccinated with the currently available vaccine survived the infection with RHDV1 K5. None of the unvaccinated rabbits survived.

Pet rabbit owners are encouraged to get further advice from their veterinarian prior to the release in the week starting 27 February. Further information is available on <http://www.pestsmart.org.au/>

The virus only affects rabbits and does not infect dogs, cats or native animals.

Wild rabbits are estimated to cause over \$200 million dollars in damage to Australian agriculture every year, and they are recognised as a potential threat to at least 304 native threatened species. They are also a nuisance across Perth chewing up home grown vegetables and damaging native revegetation sites before they have a chance to develop.

The nominated sites in the WESROC area are City Beach, Town of Cambridge, John Black Dune Park, Town of Cottesloe, Point Resolution, Swanbourne Dunes and Bishop Road Reserve, City of Nedlands and Chidley Reserve in the Town of Mosman Park.

Under favourable conditions, the virus can be expected to travel 10s of kilometres within weeks. It should be noted that there are other release sites in the metropolitan area. As such rabbits may be infected from other release areas.

**ENDS**

**About WESROC**

The Western Suburbs Regional Organisation of Councils (WESROC) comprising the Towns of Claremont, Cottesloe, and Mosman Park, the Shire of Peppermint Grove, the Cities of Nedlands and Subiaco with the Town of Cambridge work on a voluntary partnership on cross-boundary regional projects.

**About the City of Nedlands**

The City of Nedlands is situated 7km from Perth and stretches from the banks of the Swan River to the edge of the Indian Ocean. A population of over 21,000 live in the suburbs Nedlands, Dalkeith, Mt Claremont, Swanbourne, Karrakatta, and parts of Floreat and Shenton Park.

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*For further information please contact [communications@nedlands.wa.gov.au](mailto:communications@nedlands.wa.gov.au) or 9273 3500*