

FERAL RABBITS ARE FOUND REGIONWIDE

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Feral rabbits can be found across the Canterbury region. Certain areas, including the Upper Waitaki Valley, the Mackenzie Basin and inland Kaikōura are highly prone to rabbit infestations.

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Control options

Ask us if you need help with control on your land. Rather than relying on a single method, a combination of the methods below is more effective.

Poisoning

Generally only suitable in rural areas. Follow the manufacturer instructions and keep bait containers in cool, dry, locked cupboards.

Shooting

Can work for light infestations. Not suitable if people/ animals are nearby. Shooters must have a firearms licence or be under supervision. Neighbours should be informed and targets should be positively identified.

Fumigation

Effective for rabbits in a burrow, especially young rabbits who do not travel far. Comply with instructions to avoid poisoning.

Repellents and tree protectors

Repellents are generally applied as sprays periodically. Plastic or core-flute shields surround plants and restrict rabbit access.

Fencing

Can protect gardens and crops. Should be at least 80cm high and buried to 20cm (or bent as an apron and pegged/stoned). Netting should be galvanised wire with a maximum mesh size of 3cm.



More information
www.ecan.govt.nz/pests
(pages 54 to 56 of the plan)

 **Environment
Canterbury**
Regional Council
Kaunhera Taiao ki Waitaha

Contact us on:
0800 324 636 or
biosecurity@ecan.govt.nz

E18/6756

Feral Rabbits

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



Why are feral rabbits a pest?

Rabbits are an economic and environmental pest. In large numbers, they compete for grazing, reducing the amount of palatable pasture and farm stocking capacity, and cause significant disturbance to soil with burrows and scratching. They also damage young plantation trees and horticultural crops, and can reduce native species diversity. When rabbit populations reach high numbers, controlling them is expensive.

Who is responsible for control?

Land occupiers within Canterbury are responsible for keeping feral rabbit densities at or below Level 3 on the Modified McLean Scale on their property.

Environment Canterbury will inspect land highly prone to rabbits in the hill and high country to ensure land occupiers are keeping rabbit densities at required levels and react to complaints where pockets of high-density rabbits are reported.

Modified McLean Scale

- 1 No sign found. No rabbits seen.
- 2 Very infrequent sign present. Unlikely to see rabbits.
- 3 Pellet heaps spaced 10m or more apart on average. Odd rabbits seen; sign and some pellet heap showing up.
- 4 Pellet heaps spaced between 5m and 10m apart on average. Pockets of rabbits; sign and fresh burrows very noticeable.
- 5 Pellet heaps spaced 5m or less apart on average. Infestation spreading out from heavy pockets.
- 6 Sign very frequent with pellet heaps often less than 5m apart over the whole area. Rabbits may be seen over the whole area.
- 7 Sign very frequent with 2-3 pellet heaps often less than 5m apart over the whole area. Rabbits may be seen over the whole area.
- 8 Sign very frequent with 3 or more pellet heaps often less than 5m apart over the whole area. Rabbits likely be seen in large numbers over the whole area.

Feral Rabbits

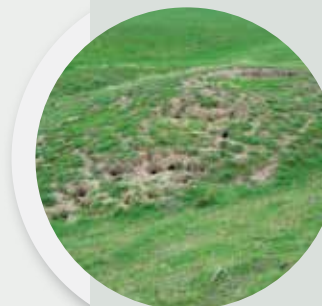
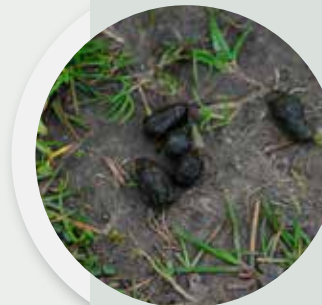
(Oryctolagus cuniculus)

PEST STATUS:
Sustained Control Programme

The objective of this programme is to keep populations of feral rabbits at or below Level 3 of the Modified McLean Scale.



WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR



- > The European rabbit is about the size of a small domestic cat.
- > Most are light brown in colour.
- > They breed continually throughout the year, with adult females capable of producing up to 50 young each year.
- > Rabbits are smaller than hares, weighing 1.5kg to 2kg, compared with 2.5kg to 5kg for a hare.
- > Droppings in small heaps ('buck heaps'), and scattered throughout feeding areas.
- > Droppings are dark in colour, oval shaped and 8 to 10mm in length.
- > Burrows and scratching.
- > Damage to pasture and plants.