



Rabbits.

DESCRIPTION

European rabbits are small to medium sized herbivores, usually grey-brown in colour with a white belly and white under their tail.

They are now widespread over much of New Zealand's pastoral land and are also a considerable nuisance in many urban areas. However due to modern farming techniques, Taranaki's high rainfall and extensive rabbit control in the past, rabbits are not the problem they once were in this area. Although south Taranaki coastal areas maybe prone during the warmer months.

The main concern with rabbits is that they breed prolifically with a gestation period of approximately twenty-eight days. The main breeding season is from June to November. The doe can re-mate within twelve hours of delivering a litter, which means by the time her first litter is a month old, she is ready to have her next. Fortunately, the mortality rate is very high, and out of every hundred born, approximately ten survive to reach six months and one or two reach three years of age.

They are most active in the late afternoon or evenings, spending most of the morning and early afternoon resting in cover.

VALUES AT RISK

Farm production and amenity values

Pasture production and newly planted trees and crops are particularly at risk.

STRATEGY RULES

You must control rabbits on your property if rabbit numbers are high, spreading from your property and impacting upon your neighbour.

HOW TO CONTROL RABBITS

Poisoning. Pindone is a cereal based anti-coagulant poison available in pellet form. It is generally suitable for use in both urban and rural areas. You do not require a poisons licence to use this poison, however, the bait must be placed in bait stations. It is recommended that you wear gloves to avoid getting human scent on the bait.

Best results are gained outside of the breeding season from late April to early August.

Habitat manipulation. You can get good results simply by destroying or modifying places preferred by rabbits such as boxthorn hedges, rubbish and debris piles and low lying scrub eg. Blackberry

Shooting, if shooting is to be used a .22 rifle and shotgun are the preferred firearms. All the necessary precautions must be taken when using firearms.

Trapping, is a technique used for the control of rabbits, however, it requires a high level of skill and is best used by professionals.

Fumigation, using magtoxin enables burrows and warrens to be destroyed.

Preventative techniques such as using wire netting, electric wires, drums and sheaths or hemp soaked in creosote wrapped around the trunks will prevent damage to plants and shrubs.

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.landcareresearch.co.nz/publications/infosheets/rabbits

PUBLICATIONS

King, EM: The Handbook of New Zealand Mammals. Oxford Press, Auckland, 1995



Rabbit prone land in Taranaki

For further advice or information about pest animal management contact:

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