



Brown hare.



Predicted hare population density

DESCRIPTION

Brown hares are herbivores (feed on plants) and are similar to rabbits in appearance, though much larger in size and with more muscular hindquarters.

The breeding season commences around the shortest day of the year (late June). The gestation period is 42 days and the average litter size is only two or three. Females can have an average of four to five litters per year.

Hares are largely solitary animals and have a large home range. They are nocturnal animals, feeding at night and lying up during the day in 'forms' in long grass or similar cover such as shelter belts. They feed late in the afternoon, particularly where there is sufficient cover to keep them reasonably well hidden.

Hares prefer open tussock, farmland, plantations, orchards or similar cover. They can travel up to three to four kilometres to feed on a wide variety of shrubs, herbaceous plants and other field crops. They eat bark on trees and can cause a lot of damage in nurseries.

VALUES AT RISK

Farm production and amenity values.

Hares are an increasing problem in orchards and developing horticultural areas, which are often adjacent to farmland or forest. Even low numbers of hares can cause severe damage to newly planted shelter belts, young trees, cuttings, vegetables or plant nurseries.

Riparian plantings are at risk, especially just after planting and for the next four to five months (generally June to late October)

STRATEGY RULES

There is no rule requiring you to control hares. Any control is voluntary.

HOW TO CONTROL HARES

Shooting

Shooting is regarded as the only form of control available. Night shooting is recommended as the most successful method when dealing with hares. It is important to carry out this control thoroughly as the animal can become light-shy making them difficult to eradicate in the future.

If shooting is to be used .22 rifles and shotguns are the preferred firearms. All the necessary precautions must be taken when using firearms.

Hares can be identified by the pinky/red colour of their eyes at night.



Shooting from bike

Poisoning

It is difficult to control hares with poison as they are reluctant to accept baits and cover a large home range which means it is less likely to encounter baits.

Repellents

The most effective of these being egg-based products which are high in protein and lipids and when mixed with an adhesive (acrylic resin) will provide some protection from hares. Other ready mixed repellants include Thiroprotect and Treepel.

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.hbrc.govt.nz
www.horizons.govt.nz
www.gw.govt.nz

PUBLICATIONS

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

For further advice or information about pest animal management contact:

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