

Feral Animals

Rabbits



Photo by Steve Parker

Where to take unwanted rabbits

Porche's Small Animal Rescue, Thornleigh.	9481 8517// 0403 155 810
Animal Welfare League, Ingleside.	8899 3333// 9913 8731
R.S.P.C.A Animals Shelter, Yagoona.	9770 7555

Where to get further information

<i>Hornsby Council</i>	9847 6666
<i>Hunters Hill Council</i>	9424 0844
<i>Lane Cove Council</i>	9911 3555
<i>Manly Council</i>	8966 3854
<i>Mosman Council</i>	9978 4025
<i>National Parks Sydney North Region</i>	9472 8953
<i>Pittwater Council</i>	9970 1111
<i>Cumberland Livestock Health & Pest Authority</i>	4655 9165
<i>Sydney Harbour National Park</i>	9960 6266
<i>Warringah Council</i>	9942 2111
<i>Ku-ring-gai Council</i>	94240888
<i>Willoughby Council</i>	9777 1000
<i>City of Ryde</i>	9952 8222
<i>The Hills Shire Council</i>	9843 0555

What are your responsibilities?

Residents should realistically consider the demands of owning a pet rabbit before purchasing. The release or *dumping of any domestic animal is illegal*. Unwanted rabbits should be re-homed thoughtfully.

The National Parks and Wildlife Act (1974), prohibits the release without a license, of any animal not native to NSW (except a homing pigeon)

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1979), states that a person shall not abandon an animal. Maximum penalty \$5500 or 6 months imprisonment.

The Rural Lands Protection Act (1998), requires occupiers of public and private land to “fully and continuously suppress and destroy” rabbits on their land.

Commonwealth Endangered Species Protection Act 1992 lists ‘Competition and Land degradation by feral rabbits’ as a Key Threatening Process.

Control feral rabbits on your own property. Consider working with your neighbours to achieve better control.



Photo by Richard Ali.

The Rabbit Problem in Australia

From an original 24 rabbits released in Victoria in 1859, Australia is now home to the largest feral rabbit population in the world. Rabbits invaded Australia faster than any other mammal on any other continent.

Rabbits are recognised as a pest animal under the *Rural Lands Protection Act* (1998). Rabbits are well adapted to harsh Australian conditions and populations multiply rapidly when conditions are favourable.



Photo by Richard Ali.

Damage Caused by Rabbits

Rabbits:-

- Damage native vegetation communities, such as open forest woodlands, headlands and dune systems, by grazing, digging and increasing nutrients.
- Dig warrens and holes in bushland, gardens, playing fields, under houses and other structures.
- Reduce native plant diversity by eating native seedlings.
- Increase erosion by grazing and digging, especially after fire.
- Compete with native animals for food and shelter resources.
- Destroy lawns, garden plants and seedlings.

Small bushland reserves adjacent to parkland and private properties are often the most severely affected areas in the Northern Sydney Region.

Northern Sydney Region

Feral rabbits appear to be increasing in the Northern Sydney Region. Local residents are reporting rabbits in many suburban gardens and along the bushland interface.

A high percentage of these rabbits appear to be of domestic origin. This is a direct result of releasing unwanted rabbits into suburban and bushland areas.

Rabbit Control

In response to growing community concern and environmental damage, local authorities carry out control programs, which include:

1. Biological controls, including Myxomatosis and rabbit Calicivirus
2. Cage trapping
3. Warren destruction and fumigation
4. Co-ordinated baiting programs using Pindone
5. Shooting

Rabbits are difficult to control in urban areas, and control is most effective when carried out in a co-ordinated manner.

Pet Rabbits

The amount of care required by rabbits is often underestimated. They can easily escape if secure housing is not provided.

- Ensure pet rabbits are properly contained.
- Have your pet rabbits sterilised.