



Media Statement

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Boosting rabbit control on agenda for May roadshow

Information on an improved biocontrol method to control wild rabbits will be available at roadshow workshops across the Western Australian agricultural region in May.

A new national initiative against the pest aims to release a new strain of rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus, known as RHDV1-K5.

The WA roadshow, organised by the Department of Agriculture and Food and Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre in conjunction with local groups, will run from 23 to 27 May.

Department officer Susan Campbell said wild rabbits caused agricultural losses estimated at \$200 million across Australia each year.

“Wild rabbits are a common and widespread pest - they compete with livestock and native animals for food, damage crops and cause erosion,” Dr Campbell said.

RHDV, commonly known as rabbit calicivirus, was first introduced into Australia in 1996.

“Wild rabbit numbers are trending upwards across the country as populations develop resistance to the original RHDV strain,” Dr Campbell said.

RHDV1-K5 is a naturally occurring variant from Korea which is currently under assessment by government regulators.

Release is likely to take place in early spring 2016 or autumn 2017.

Dr Campbell said roadshow participants would learn more about how RHDV1-K5 works and spreads, along with the requirements for landholders and groups who wish to be involved in the national release.

“We invite landholders and local groups to come along and hear how they can help maximise the impact of this release,” she said.

Attendees will hear from Dr Tarnya Cox, RHD-Boost project leader from the NSW Department of Primary Industries and John Matthews, Biosecurity Manager for the Victorian Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources.

The sessions are free and will run for approximately 90 minutes. Roadshow sessions include:

- Albany, 23 May
- Bremer Bay, 23 May (evening)
- Katanning, 24 May
- Bridgetown, Bunbury, Harvey, 25 May
- Geraldton, Mingenew, 26 May.

For workshop details or to register, contact Peter Robson at peter.robson@agric.wa.gov.au or on 0427 088 174 or Dr Campbell at susan.campbell@agric.wa.gov.au.

Groups focused on biosecurity, landcare and agricultural management who wish to be involved with the proposed release of this new strain should nominate sites by 31 May 2016.

More information is available through the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre's PestSmart website (pestsmart.org.au/get-involved-as-a-monitoring-site).

Dr Campbell said even with a new strain, it was critical that conventional control measures against rabbits continued to be used. More information on rabbit control is available from the DAFWA website (agric.wa.gov.au).

For pet rabbit owners, a vaccine for prevention of RHDV disease is available. More information is available from the [PestSmart website](#).

Photo caption: *Information on an improved biocontrol method to control wild rabbits will be available at roadshow workshops across the Western Australian agricultural region in May.*

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