

# Working together for better rabbit control



## ORC is honing an improved approach to rabbit management this year, facilitating a range of joint initiatives through cooperative, landowner-led control operations in Otago.

Rabbits are a significant priority pest in Otago, said Manager Biosecurity and Rural Liaison Andrea Howard, and they present complex challenges for pest management.

“Much of Otago’s landscape is rabbit-prone, meaning it’s ideal country for rabbits to thrive in. One of the contributing factors to the rabbit problem in recent times has been increased urbanisation and changing land use, meaning a greater number of landowners are responsible for rabbit control.”

Under the regional rules, rabbit management is the responsibility of landowners, while ORC has a role in education, compliance and facilitating cooperative efforts.

“As you would expect, rabbits don’t recognise property boundaries, so one person’s good work can be undone if there’s not a coordinated, collaborative approach to rabbit management amongst neighbours.

“We have seen a few great examples in the last year of how a joined-up approach

between landowners can have the best impact on rabbit populations,” Ms Howard said.

ORC is working to replicate this approach in a number of locations this year, including Lake Hayes, Gibbston Valley, Wanaka, Albert Town, Queensberry, Lowburn/Pisa Moorings, Otago Peninsula and Moeraki, with more sites identified for future years.

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“ORC hasn’t operated in the direct pest control space since 2015, but we absolutely have a role to play in demonstrating leadership, increasing engagement with landowners, ensuring compliance with rules, and identifying effective ways to tackle the rabbit problem in those more difficult semi-urban and peri-urban areas” said Ms Howard.

There are good pest contractors in the region to assist landowners with work and ORC will be working with these contractors to better coordinate our activities so they can be prepared for likely consumer demand. We will also be making our

rabbit control assets available to suitably qualified people.

In the past year, ORC has substantially increased the number of properties inspected and it’s clear in some areas, particularly larger rural properties, that landowners are proactively managing rabbit populations. However, we still have a long way to go to reduce overall populations across the region.

ORC is committed to instituting a collaborative approach to integrated rabbit control in Otago, based on engaging landowners, facilitating cooperation, and encouraging best management practices appropriate to the range of properties and land use types in the region.

“Otago’s rabbit problem is not one that will be solved overnight, or with a silver bullet – continuous action on private land will always be essential to back up control efforts and ensure those gains are not lost. But a collective effort will go a long way to managing rabbits more effectively.”

If you are in one of the areas listed above and would like to register your interest in landowner led initiatives, please fill in our online form at

[www.orc.govt.nz/rabbits-signup](http://www.orc.govt.nz/rabbits-signup)

We can let you know when a community meeting will be held or record your interest in being involved in future projects.