

Managing rabbits



Staying on top of rabbit numbers takes coordination and ongoing effort. It's essential to tailor control methods to your property, engage professional contractors as needed, and develop a long-term plan that you stick to.

This information outlines various tools you can use to help combat rabbits on your property. If you have any questions, contact us at biosecurity@orc.govt.nz

Who is responsible?

As an Otago landowner/occupier, you are legally responsible for managing rabbits on your land.

Plan your attack

We strongly recommend that you develop a long-term plan to keep rabbit numbers low, rather than reacting to a rabbit crisis! Use our template to create a plan now!



First line of defence: rabbit-netted fencing

In many rabbit-prone parts of Otago, rabbit-netted fencing is essential to preventing rabbit reinvasion after control.

For an effective rabbit fence, you need:

- A height between **600 and 900 mm** (the higher the better).
- Galvanised **wire netting** (plastic can be eaten through).
- Fencing mesh **no larger than 40 mm** for most rural properties.
- A **smaller mesh size of 19–25 mm** — it is a better way to exclude young rabbits if no other control methods are available.
- To either **bury the rabbit netting** at least 150 mm into the ground or **bend an apron** in the direction that rabbits try and enter and pin it down with pegs or stones.
- **To keep checking for signs of rabbits** climbing or digging and repair any holes.
- **To keep rabbit-netted gates closed** when not in use. A rabbit-netted apron on the gate, as well as a concrete or wooden sill underneath, can prevent rabbits from tunnelling or squeezing through.

Watch the video on rabbit-netted fencing to learn about this method:

orc.govt.nz/rabbitfencing

Primary control

Primary control is used to knock down rabbit numbers significantly. The most common form of knock-down control is poisons, such as Pindone.

Pindone is slow acting and requires the rabbit to consume bait over multiple feeds. Any remaining rabbits should be addressed using 'secondary' control tools to maintain numbers. An effective antidote (Vitamin K1, phytomenadione) is available from veterinarians if required.

Pindone carrot



The anticoagulant Pindone is most effective when used to lace cut carrot. Pindone carrot can be applied by either licensed contractors or landowners with an Approved Use for Pindone Certificate and/or Controlled Substance Licence (CSL).

When planning a Pindone carrot operation, ensure you:

- Read the label thoroughly to ensure all safety precautions and handling and storage instructions are followed.
- Engage a licensed contractor early, or order Pindone and carrot early to ensure sufficient resource is available.
- Plan your operation for winter, when natural feed is scarce.
- Plan stock movements and make sure domestic stock or pets do not have access to treated areas.
- Erect warning signs at all access points to poisoning areas.
- Collaborate with your neighbours and notify all adjacent land occupiers (or anyone with access) of your intentions to poison.

Watch the video on Pindone carrots to learn more about this method:

orc.govt.nz/pindonecarrots

Pindone pellets



You can buy Pindone pellets at rural retailers. They store well and are best used during dry periods.

It is generally accepted that pellets are less effective than other forms of poisoning and should only be considered if other options are not feasible, e.g. when a property is in a peri-urban or urban area, including new subdivisions.

Anyone can use them in bait stations. Read the label thoroughly to ensure all safety precautions and handling and storage instructions are followed.

While bait stations may have the advantage of not requiring a licence to use, rabbits are generally cautious about feeding from them.

Pindone pellets can be broadcast, but results can vary if conditions are unsuitable or wet. Anyone broadcasting pellets must hold an Approved Use for Pindone Certificate or CSL.

Watch the video on Pindone pellets to learn about this method:

orc.govt.nz/pindonepellets

1080

Owners of rural properties may choose to use 1080 to lace cut carrot or oats to effectively reduce rabbit numbers over large areas.

This is a controlled substance. For more information, visit the Department of Conservation and Environment Protection Agency websites:

doc.govt.nz/why-we-use-1080
epa.govt.nz/1080

Secondary control

Secondary control measures can be used after primary control to help address any remaining rabbits, or as an ongoing maintenance tool to keep rabbit numbers low.

Remove rabbit habitat



Habitat changes can have a more permanent impact on rabbit numbers, as rabbits often dwell in gardens and lawns, garden sheds, woodpiles or dense vegetation where there is cover.

To remove rabbit habitat:

- Remove piles of wood, rubbish or vegetation where rabbits live.
- Prune the bottom of shrubs and hedges to remove rabbit shelter.
- Block gaps under buildings and sheds.

Night shooting



Shooting is best used as an ongoing maintenance tool to keep rabbit numbers low.

Shooting can be carried out by contractors or landowners with a firearms licence.

Shooting is most effective using a thermal scope at night when the sky is overcast with no wind.

When shooting on your property, ensure:

- You don't shoot a rifle in urban areas (unless carried out by a certified contractor).
- Air rifle holders without a firearms licence are over 18 and following safety precautions.
- You contact neighbours before you carry out shooting.
- You follow the 7 rules of firearm safety found at firearmsafetyauthority.govt.nz

Fumigate burrows



Fumigation can be used year-round in conjunction with other methods, such as following a poison operation.

Fumigants, such as Magtoxin, release toxic fumes that flow through burrows and are inhaled by rabbits, causing death. Magtoxin is only effective for burrows and works well on young rabbits, as they don't wander far from burrows.

Magtoxin can be purchased at rural retailers in small quantities (less than 3 kg). A CSL is required if purchasing larger quantities.

When fumigating rabbit burrows, ensure you:

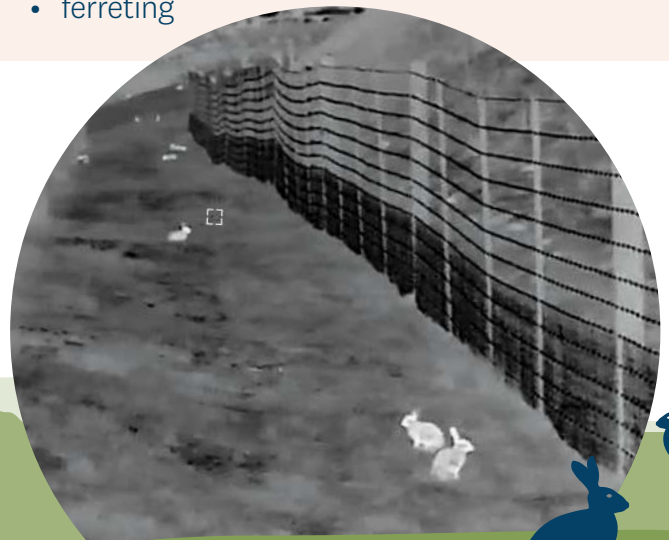
- Read the label thoroughly to ensure you follow all safety precautions, and handling and storage instructions.
- Are aware of the symptoms of poisoning and recommended first aid treatment.

Watch the video on rabbit fumigation to learn more about this method:

orc.govt.nz/RabbitFumigation

Other secondary control methods include:

- burrow destruction
- long netting
- trapping
- using trained dogs
- ferreting



Finding a contractor

Ask neighbours, other nearby landowners, local biodiversity groups or farming groups for their suggestions on contractors.

What questions to ask the contractor?

A good contractor should do a site inspection and discuss long-term rabbit management options to suit your property.

You can ask:

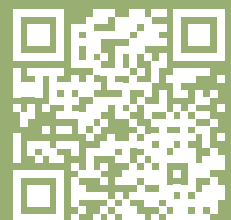
- What is their experience? Have they worked in the local area before?
- Are they authorised to use chemicals, e.g. do they hold a CSL or Approved Use for Pindone Certificate?
- Do they have protective clothing and equipment?
- Can they direct you to previous clients who vouch for their work?

Encourage them to conduct a site inspection to obtain an accurate quote.



For more information on rabbit management, visit our website

orc.govt.nz/rabbitmanagement



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