

Minister for Primary Industries and Water
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Level 5, 4 Salamanca Place HOBART TAS 7000 Australia
GPO Box 123 HOBART TAS 7001 Australia
Phone: +61 3 6165 7670
Email: minister.pearce@dpac.tas.gov.au



Ms Jen Butler MP
Member for Lyons

29 MAY 2026

C/- HAProcedure@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Ms Butler

In Parliament on 19 May 2026, you asked the following question on behalf of your constituent:

My question is from Derek Porter at the Northern Midlands. Feral rabbits are out of control in the Northern Midlands. Last year, biosecurity failed dismally. The problem is getting worse every year. When is something or anything going to be done about this problem? Putting bait like Pindone down will not fix the problem. It is also destructive to other wildlife. Destroying rabbit warrens is not effective as they dig burrows in other places. The last successful control was back in 2015 when calicivirus was released. Nothing has been successful in controlling feral rabbits since then. When is something going to be done?

Firstly, thank you for the question on behalf of your constituent. Mr Porter has also raised this matter directly with other members of Parliament and I have responded to him in my capacity as Minister for Primary Industries and Water.

European rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) are an introduced pest species that, unfortunately, thrive in Tasmanian conditions. They are notoriously difficult to manage, and their numbers are strongly linked to environmental conditions. Eradication of European rabbits from Tasmania is not possible but the most effective and cost-efficient method of controlling rabbits occurs when a system of integrated pest management is used, including long-lasting methods of rabbit control such as baiting, warren-ripping, surface harbour removal, and exclusion fencing.

Rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus (RHDV), also known as calicivirus, is an additional tool for rabbit control. It is a highly contagious virus that causes rapid disease and death in European rabbits. The effectiveness of a calicivirus release in any given year depends on multiple factors, and it should therefore be used as part of an integrated pest management program rather than as a standalone solution.

Biosecurity Tasmania has advised that they have released calicivirus in several areas within the Northern Midlands in April of this year. A full list of release sites is available on the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania website: www.nre.tas.gov.au Best practice dictates calicivirus releases do not occur in the same locations where releases occurred in 2025 to mitigate the risk of resistance and immunity in rabbit populations.

While biological control tools such as calicivirus have been successful in suppressing rabbit populations, these tools become less effective over time, and immunity to these agents will naturally build up in rabbit populations. Biological control has historically played a critical role in

managing rabbit populations nationally and national investment is required for the development of the next biological control agent to suppress rabbit numbers at landscape scale to protect gains made in previous years.

I have recently written to the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to seek an update on what work is currently underway at the Commonwealth level to develop or assess the next generation of biocontrol agents, including research and anticipated timeframes. Tasmania is supportive of strategic, coordinated national investment in development of new rabbit controls by Australian national research and invasive species bodies.

The management of invasive pests, such as rabbits, is a shared responsibility. Biosecurity Tasmania encourages landholders experiencing rabbit activity to implement an integrated pest management approach using a combination of control measures over time. Evidence shows the most effective long-term reductions in rabbit numbers occur when multiple control methods are used together and timed to target key stages of the breeding cycle. Control efforts are also generally more successful where neighbouring properties work collaboratively across a wider area.

Information on developing an integrated pest management plan for rabbits for your property is available on the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania website [Create a Rabbit Control Program | Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania](#). I have asked Biosecurity Tasmania to reach out to Mr Porter directly to assist with rabbit control planning.

Thank you again for raising this matter on behalf of your constituent.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G Pearce', with a long, sweeping flourish extending upwards and to the right.

Hon Gavin Pearce MP
Minister for Primary Industries and Water