



# Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre

MEDIA RELEASE

## STAYING ONE HOP AHEAD OF THE RABBITS

Rabbits cost Australian agriculture over \$200 million each year and impact 156 threatened native species. At the 15<sup>th</sup> Australasian Vertebrate Pest Conference in Sydney today, new ways to control the increasing rabbit populations and the damage they inflict on our environment will be explored by Australia's top experts in wild rabbits.

Dr Glen Saunders, Program Leader of Terrestrial Products and Strategies at the Invasive Animals CRC, said that the rabbit research undertaken by the CRC has proven to be an excellent foundation for scientists and researchers to investigate further biological control agents.

"The Invasive Animals CRC has been very successful with its public awareness programs, which are underpinned by critical research to increase the effectiveness of Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD).

Our work on the RHD Boost project brings communities and researchers together to look for new strains of the RHD virus around the world that, if proven effective and safe, have potential for release here," said Dr Saunders.

The release of a new RHD strain means improved rabbit control worth \$1.4 billion to the Australian economy over 15 years.

"In these financially challenging times, we need to find innovative ways to reduce the impact of invasive animals on our economy, agriculture industry and environment.

These ways are being discussed at the conference today by some of Australia's top rabbit researchers and scientists," said Dr Saunders.

The Invasive Animals CRC has been awarded the national *2011 Award for Excellence in Innovation* for their public awareness programs on rabbit management by the CRC Association. More information on these public awareness programs is available on a 3 minute video, available from Tracey Lianos, Communications Manager, Invasive Animals CRC (details below).

The 15<sup>th</sup> Australasian Vertebrate Pest Conference will be held at the Dockside Convention Centre, Sydney from Monday 20 June to Thursday 23 June 2011. Presentations may be made available to the media upon request. Please contact Dr Glen Saunders (details below) for an interview.

Statement ends Tuesday 21 June 2011.

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### CONTACTS:

#### FOR INTERVIEWS

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#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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