

# Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre MEDIA RELEASE

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## Innovative app to track rabbit control

A new function to boost the power of the popular RabbitScan app has given the community the ability to track the spread of rabbit biocontrol agents and viruses from their smart phone or computer, via a digital map.

The innovative tracking function in the RabbitScan app was developed through the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre (IACRC) as part of its rabbit haemorrhagic disease (RHD) virus project, called RHD Boost.

NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) researcher and project leader of RHD Boost, Dr Tarnya Cox, said the new tool delivers an innovative approach to understanding rabbit biocontrol agents and viruses in the Australian landscape.

“Farmers, land managers and the community can play an important role in recording evidence of rabbit disease which can be used as scientific data to guide local rabbit management activities,” Dr Cox said.

“The app takes you through a few simple steps to record details of dead rabbits and includes images of rabbits affected by virus and disease for easy identification.

“A powerful aspect of the new tracker gives people the opportunity to submit tissue samples from dead rabbits with suspected RHD virus.

“When users click to submit a tissue sample our research team sends a free, postage-paid sampling kit with full instructions on how to collect and send the sample.

“Once the tissue sample is analysed an update on the digital map will record the results and the person who submitted the sample will be notified with accurate information of what virus is affecting rabbits in their area or control site, which is valuable information for their local rabbit management plan.

“The project is giving communities across Australia the power to make informed management decisions based on scientific evidence,” Dr Cox said.

NSW DPI professional officer and IACRC FeralScan manager, Peter West, said the user-friendly RabbitScan app can be used without mobile phone coverage and is suitable for remote areas.

“Rabbit details recorded out of phone reception are stored until you are in range. Once in range users can upload records directly to the map with just one button,” Mr West said.

“The RabbitScan app and website are moving from a tool which tells you where rabbits are to one that can also reveal the effectiveness of local management decisions and actions on a national scale.”

“RabbitScan is a tool for the community, led by the community and benefiting the community, which will assist land managers and farmers in making future management decisions.”

RabbitScan currently has more than 12,000 registered users who can update their apps to access the Rabbit Biocontrol Tracker via [Apple](#) or [Google Play](#) stores or [www.rabbitscan.org.au](http://www.rabbitscan.org.au)

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[The 'RHD Boost' research initiative](#) has been delivered through the Invasive Animals CRC, with major financial and in kind resources provided by the Australian government, state governments, and industry and non-government organisations. The partners in this national collaborative project include:

- Federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
- NSW Department of Primary Industries
- CSIRO
- Australian Wool Innovation
- Meat and Livestock Australia
- Foundation for Rabbit Free Australia
- Victoria Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources
- Department of Primary Industries and Regions SA
- Department of Agriculture and Food WA
- University of Adelaide
- Department of Agriculture and Food Queensland
- ACT Government Environment and Planning
- ACT Government Territory and Municipal Services
- Parks Victoria

For more information visit [www.healthierlandscapes.org.au](http://www.healthierlandscapes.org.au)

Journalist note: Images available upon request

The image shows two versions of the Rabbit Biocontrol Tracker interface. On the left is the mobile app interface, featuring a green header with 'RABBIT SCAN' and a rabbit icon, and buttons for 'Record Rabbits', 'Report Disease', 'About Rabbits', and 'Learn More'. On the right is the desktop website interface, titled 'Rabbit Biocontrol Tracker', which includes a map of Australia and surrounding regions. The map displays various data points and a legend for disease reports and biocontrol agents. The legend includes: Disease reported (yellow dot), RHDV1 K5 (Korean strain) (red dot), RHDV1 v351 (Czech strain) (blue dot), RHDV1 (Chinese strain) (purple dot), RHDV2 strain (green dot), Possible RHDV (no sample submitted) (orange dot), Possible Myxomatosis (light blue dot), Negative (grey dot), Known region for rabbits (orange outline), and Rabbit barrier fences (red line).

