

Foundation for a Rabbit Free Australia Inc

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 2003

CHAIRMAN Dr J Radcliffe	Chairman	ADVISERS Mr G Mutze	Senior Research Scientist Animal and Plant Control Commission
TREASURER Mr W Morgan	Committee member	Mr N Newland Mr B Drew	Immediate past chairman Immediate past treasurer
COMMITTEE MEMBERS		HONORARY POSITIONS	
Mr K Heinrich	Committee member and volunteer	Mr A Thomas	Patent Attorney
Ms S Starick	Representing South Australian Farmers' Federation	Mr A Fuller	Solicitor
Ms S Oldfield	Committee member	Mr DG Bramwell	Auditor
CHAIRMAN – RFA NSW Mr D Lord			

Chairman's Report

To the Annual General Meeting held at the Adelaide Zoological Gardens Monday 1st December 2003

It gives me great pleasure to welcome members to the 11th Annual General Meeting of the Foundation. Once again 2003 has been a year of consolidation, although we anticipate supporting some substantial research in the near future.

In the meantime, we plan to use some of the current surplus to encourage entry of students into the area of rabbit research by supporting an Honours student, and to provide operational support to a PhD student.

The Foundation has formalised its links with the Rotary organisation, the Australian Campaign for Rabbit Eradication (ACRE), with the first annual joint meeting. ACRE has sought RFA's assistance with locating an appropriate site for the rabbit rippers that ACRE commissions and makes available to appropriate local authorities for them to hire to landholders for a nominal fee. ACRE plans to sell Haigh's bilbies to Rotary members for Easter 2004, which will not only raise money for both RFA and ACRE but will promote the concept of the Easter Bilby. We are also investigating joint support for a future project to be conducted by APCC, subject to approval by the Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicine Authority.

Both RFA and ACRE reiterated their commitment to the annual Haigh's Easter Bilby Weekend in Rundle Mall. 2003 marked Easter Bilby's 10th birthday, and the weekend was a great success. RFA had a staffed display, which drew considerable interest from people not usually exposed to information about the ecological and economic problems posed by rabbits.

The 10th anniversary of the Easter Bilby also marked the expiry of the initial trademark agreements, which have been renewed.

Our inaugural Executive Director, William Morgan, stepped down this year. I would like to express our deepest appreciation for the efforts William has put in since RFA was founded as the Anti Rabbit Research Foundation of Australia (ARRFA). His efficiency and dedication have made the activities of the Foundation possible. His breadth of knowledge and skill will be missed. Fortunately he has agreed to stay on as an interim Committee Member, filling the vacancy left by Faerlie Bartholomaeus who has replaced William as Executive Director.

Another loss to the Foundation is our Treasurer, Barry Drew, who has served five years on the committee and must step down. His financial acumen has directed the Foundation well during his term as Treasurer. He has agreed to remain on the Committee in an advisory role, and William Morgan is the interim Treasurer.

The Foundation recorded a surplus of \$8,705 this year, including an increased level of licensing fees from one of our major supporters, Haigh's Chocolates. The share portfolio has performed well, with both capital growth and an increase in dividends recorded.

Our investments need to be increased if the Foundation is to support rabbit research programs in the near future. All membership fees and donations from our supporters assist in this aim,

as do our continuing support from Haigh's and our investment income.

Thank you to those committee members who have assisted with the activities of the Foundation this year. These have included staffing the RFA stand at the Easter Bilby weekend, preparing submissions, and attending meetings. Particular thanks go to William Morgan, who is easing the transition of the new Executive Officer, Faerlie Bartholomaeus, by his continued input and advice.

In our newsletter for 2003, we were able to circulate an excellent article about the impact of RHD, originally published by the CSIRO ecological magazine, ECOS. It is good to see such publicity for work that was partly funded by the generous contributions of RFA members.

In conclusion, the Foundation has continued to keep in touch with development in rabbit research and policy in Australia. The perceived importance of the rabbit problem is still influenced by the success of rabbit calicivirus, compounded by the effects of drought on many of our loyal supporters. The Foundation has been planning its approach to rabbit research funding when sufficient funds are available, and maximising our influence with the relatively small budget available at present.

Dr John Radcliffe
1st December 2003