

Foundation for Rabbit-Free Australia Inc.

Newsletter Extracts, May 2021

Revised Logo

The 'RFA' logo is retiring after many years of service. Our members 'get' the logo, but people unfamiliar with the Foundation struggle to understand what RFA stands for ('Is it a Regional Forest Agreement?' was one query we had). Some also don't recognise the emblem as a bilby, or necessarily understand why it is there.



The new logo aims to better explain who we are and what we're on about by emphasising key parts of our name ('Rabbit-Free Australia'). It retains the bilby emblem, drawn from our Easter Bilby trademark, which has been part of the Foundation's logo since its first inception as ARRFA (Anti-Rabbit Research Foundation of Australia).

There are three versions of the logo for use in different situations. Our favourite includes our slogan of 'Bilbies Not Bunnies'.



Membership Management. Introducing Wild Apricot & Stripe

Foundation for Rabbit-Free Australia is adopting a new on-line membership management program, called Wild Apricot. It has a number of immediate advantages and will position the Foundation for the future:

- It will automate membership renewals, making it easier for members and the Foundation.
- It will provide more payment options - something we have been asked for on numerous occasions – adding an online payment by credit card option, while Electronic Funds Transfers and cheques will still be accepted. The on-line payments will be via the Stripe payments platform – one of the most secure on-line services available.
- It also allows us to provide a wider range of membership options to choose from; including a 5 year term and a family package (two adults and up to three children – or even grandchildren).

We hope the wider range of membership and payment options will be useful for all members, however Wild Apricot also opens up new ways of sharing information and communicating in a secure environment. All Foundation members will be asked to set up a secure password-protected account via our website where they can manage their membership and the communication options.

Once everything is fully operational members will have access to:

- A Blog and a Members Forum so ideas can be explored, questions asked, and news shared.
- Links to Latest News about rabbits, and feeds from our Facebook and Twitter accounts.

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The 'members lounge', where all this will take place, will be constructed over coming months as new elements are added and brought together. It will be open for anyone to view, but only Foundation members will be able to initiate or join the conversations. The Foundation enjoys a wide mix of members and the new platform will give them rare opportunities for secure online interaction.

Membership Renewal 2021-22

The first exposure members will have to the new Wild Apricot membership system will be an emailed invitation to set up a password for their account, as part of the security provisions for the site. Instructions will be provided via email to assist in that, but if further assistance is required [Admin Support](#) will be available to help.

Once logged in you can view your Profile and, if you wish, change your membership to one of the new options (a 5-year Term membership @ \$225, or a Family option @ \$110). You will also be able to renew your membership with an on-line payment at that time, or await a 'Renew your membership' email inviting payment of an invoice.

You may also elect to make a donation during the renewal process (similar to membership forms in the past). If you have previously elected to do so, the renewal will automatically include the donation, but you can vary or delete it if you wish.

We hope you find the new system beneficial as different elements are rolled out, commencing with membership renewal. If there are any queries or teething problems please let us know immediately. This will be a learning experience for us as well and we'll be keen to help work things out.

As always, if you have a friend or associate you think would enjoy being part of Rabbit-Free Australia, please encourage them to join up. Every member is important to us.

Omeo Primary School – Starting young

We were delighted to recently receive a donation from the Omeo Primary School in the High Country of East Gippsland. Donations are always very well received, but the story behind this made it even more special.

Students, through the Junior School Council, were looking for a cause to support and decided to do something about rabbits. After choosing the topic they researched it, presented to the school (with a few parents also contributing), and planned a series of Easter Events to raise awareness and money. There were movies, colouring-ins and an Easter egg hunt. It was a great example of children learning about the environment and doing something constructive to help make a better future. A credit to the students, teachers and parents involved.



Omeo Primary students hunting for Easter eggs.

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New Projects

Two new projects have been included in our current research portfolio, both with the University of NSW, following a nation-wide invitation to submit proposals. They are:

- **Rabbit impacts on ground layer plant communities.** Foundation funding will support Neil Ross to conduct field work in semi-arid areas of NSW and SA to monitor growth within and outside of long-term rabbit exclosures. It will help us better document the impact of rabbits and the benefits of rabbit control for plant communities. Some rabbit grazing impacts can be generations in the making. By looking at old exclosures, it is hoped to detect any long-term changes in plant communities.
- **Heatwave impacts on rabbits and native burrowing animals.** Dr Katherine Moseby will use monitoring equipment in burrows and on GPS collars to explore how heatwaves affect the behaviour and survival of rabbits, bilbies and bettongs at sites in arid areas of NSW and SA. Foundation funds will assist with the purchase of monitoring devices. The results will indicate how different species may fare under a warming climate and whether that might influence future rabbit control options.



Neil Ross and Katherine Moseby will be undertaking ecological studies with support from the Foundation.

CISS Membership

The Centre for Invasive Species Solutions ([CISS](#)) is a national research and development collaboration developing tools to better manage invasive vertebrate pests and weeds. With funding from national and state governments, as well as from industry and research organisations, it coordinates major national programs for rabbit bio-control research as well as exploring genetic technologies. It is also behind products like *pestsmart*, Feral Scan and the Glovebox Guides available to help landholders apply best practice rabbit control.

Foundation for Rabbit-Free Australia has recently become an Associate Member of CISS. The relationship has mutual benefit. It provides the Foundation an opportunity to contribute directly to the Centre's portfolio of rabbit projects and we are already enjoying the benefits of open dialogue between the two organisations.



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Latest News

Latest News posts from the Rabbit-Free Australia website www.rabbitfreeaustralia.org.au:

- **New light on the spread of RHDV2.** Nearly 4,000 blood samples from rabbits across Australia have helped explain the spread of RHDV2, which is partly due to the capability to infect young rabbits and spread early in a breeding season.
- **Lab work to confront rabbits.** Research is underway to develop new laboratory techniques to study RHDV, saving time and money compared to field studies. If successful, it will fast-track the development of new bio-controls for rabbits.
- **Connections - rabbits, cats & bilbies.** Rabbits can sustain feral cats, which hunt native mammals like bilbies. However, new research is indicating that if feral cats are introduced in low numbers to a controlled environment, then animals like bilbies may become more 'predator wary' and have better chances of surviving.
- **Pygmy rabbits of North America.** A reminder, 'There's a place for every creature. Protect it in its place, and make sure it doesn't invade that of another.'

This Newsletter is based on the electronic version of May 24, 2021.

