



Foundation for Rabbit-Free Australia

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AGM

Members enjoyed the opportunity to meet for our November 2021 AGM and to hear an excellent presentation from Katherine Moseby (see [Rabbit Insights](#), below, for more information). Once again **Zoos SA** provided the Santos Conservation Centre as a venue and those present were also treated with a gift from Foundation Sponsor, **Haigh's Chocolates**.

The **Annual Report** is **appended**.

The meeting marked the end of a five year term for committee member Bruce Munday, but thankfully Bruce is continuing to contribute as an Advisor including lending his unique skills to the development of Newsletter articles.

The AGM also marked the retirement of Deane Crabb from the committee as a nominee of Livestock SA. His wise contributions will be missed. **Livestock SA** took the opportunity to re-affirm their commitment and support to Rabbit-Free Australia, maintaining their status as a Foundation Sponsor. Joe Keynes (President of Livestock SA) has been welcomed to the committee, maintaining continuity in their representation.

Anne Burgi, has been assisting the Foundation with sub-editing and design work on numerous publications and has accepted a nomination to be formally recognised as an Advisor

Greg Mutze

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Greg Mutze, after battling cancer in recent years. Greg was a long serving supporter of the Foundation, being involved since the early days of its formation, providing expert advice and technical support, and more recently as a committee member.

His research contributions to the control of rabbits have been recognised across Australia, along with his continual willingness to share his knowledge and assist others involved in rabbit research.

A memorial summarising Greg's many contributions is **appended**.

Greg addressing an early Rabbit-Free forum.



Gene drive technology for rabbit eradication

Rabbit-Free Australia provided catalytic funding to support proof-of-concept investigations into the possibility of using gene drive technology for rabbit control.

That investment enabled Stephen Frankenberg from the **University of Melbourne** to attract further funds and build a team that is now engaged on a large program of related gene drive research.

Covid-19 lock-downs in Victoria have restricted their access to laboratories, but the project is none-the-less making good progress in a highly challenging and technical endeavour.

Being involved with this work helps us understand the technology, while the project is already developing techniques that will have application in any future rabbit gene drive work.

With Stephen's help a summary of the technology and this project is **appended**.



Stephen Frankenberg, Patricia Jusuf & Clancy Lawler

Ask me anything - I'm an expert

Twelve months ago most of our committee didn't know there was such a thing as an AMA, let alone what it was. Now we all do. It's short for Ask Me Anything - I'm an expert, and is used in online forums where people can ask questions on all sorts of topics.

Thanks to the generosity of **Brian Cooke** and **Amy Iannella** we now have two AMA's in our **Rabbit-Free Forum**, via the Members Lounge on our website. If you have a question about biological controls for rabbits or rabbit genetics, please log-in and ask away.

It's very early days for the Forum and we no doubt have much to learn on how to optimise it, but already there are some interesting discussions taking place. Anyone can see the discussions but only members are able to pose questions and comment.

Ask Brian Cooke or Amy Iannella a question @ [Rabbit-Free Forum](#).



Rabbit R&D Update

In collaboration with **CISS**, **Rabbit-Free Australia** is planning an online update on the latest rabbit related research. Themes for the Update are rabbit bio-control and awareness raising and we plan to cover several topics:

- Environmental and economic benefits of rabbit control
- How RHDV is working and implications for RHDV-K5 releases
- Raising awareness of rabbit problems and gaining support for control programs.

Brian Cooke – Personal profile

Foundation Patron, Brian Cooke, will be known to many Foundation members. His work has been fundamental in developing the biological controls that mean there is now a whole generation of land managers who have never seen a rabbit plague, and his understanding of rabbits is matched only by his generosity in sharing it.

Brian tells his story in the latest of our member profiles – which is **appended**. It takes us on a trip around the world including Spain, Britain, Scandinavia, Chile, the Galapagos Islands – and even Wardang Island.

A story about a young boy growing up with a fascination for the natural world, it is also a story of how two of our crucial rabbit bio-controls (myxo spreading rabbit fleas and RHD) were researched and ultimately released in Australia.

Katherine Moseby – Rabbit Insights

Dr. Katherine Moseby gave a very well received presentation to our November, 2021 AGM.

Katherine is a respected and influential scientist (through roles with **University of NSW** and **University of Adelaide**), and a leader in practical management for conservation (as demonstrated by her co-management of a private, rabbit-free sanctuary, and her position as Principal Scientist with **Arid Recovery** at Roxby Downs).

Katherine drew on her experience and research to provide insights into rabbit management and ecological restoration.

A **summary** of her insights, covering everything from hands-on rabbit control methods to questions of prey-shifting and over-abundant native herbivores, is **appended**.

Katherine was recently interviewed by Richard Fidler on ABC Conversations and is available on-line



Katherine Moseby was guest speaker at the AGM

From the kitchen to the countryside

Former chef, Aris Sertarides, became interested in **Landcare** where he encountered rabbits and learnt of the harm they cause.

Following training in rabbit control by VRAN (**Victorian Rabbit Action Network**), Aris is now venturing out into the commercial world as a contractor, providing advice and control services. Aris is specialising in the control of rabbits in sensitive environments, like peri-urban areas.

It is a great story and, thanks to Bruce Munday, is appended.



Aris Sertarides installing rabbit-proof netting.

Latest News

For information, a few research reports from the Latest News feed in our website's [Member's Lounge](#).

- [Rabbits - Ecosystem engineers](#). How rabbits change entire ecosystems.
- [Rabbits - ecosystem invaders](#). Why rabbit control is a top priority.
- [Feral cats rely on rabbits](#). Why cat control should start with rabbits.
- [Unholy trinity - rabbits, cats and foxes](#). Including, can native prey be taught to be more predator wary?

Feedback

Taking the AGM online?

It's been suggested that we should video presentations at **next years AGM** and make them available **on-line** for those unable to attend. We'd love to hear your thoughts and whether you'd take up the opportunity to view it or not. Please let us know your thoughts.

General

Any thoughts on this Newsletter, technical difficulties with links, things you'd like to see in future editions, or any matters to do with the Foundation - [please let us know](#).