

Can I have a pet rabbit?



Why are pet rabbits illegal in Queensland?

Rabbits are Australia's most destructive agricultural and environmental introduced animal pest, costing up to \$1 billion annually. They cause severe land degradation and soil erosion and threaten the survival of many rare and endangered native species.

Domestic rabbits and European wild rabbits are the same species and readily interbreed. Escaped or released pet rabbits have the potential to form new wild populations within the rabbit-free area. A significant proportion of feral rabbits in areas around Sydney and Tweed Heads are the result of released or escaped pet rabbits.



Queensland is the only state to keep an area free of rabbits by maintaining a rabbit-proof fence and controlling rabbit populations in the area. Allowing rabbits to be kept within this area may endanger the rabbit-free status.

Legal requirements

The rabbit is a restricted invasive animal under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. It must not be moved, kept, fed, given away, sold, or released into the environment.

At a local level, each local government must have a biosecurity plan that covers invasive animals in its area. This plan may include actions to be taken on certain species. Some of these actions may be required under local laws. Contact your local government for more information.

Can I get a permit for a pet rabbit?

A permit **cannot** be issued for keeping pet rabbits of any variety for any private purpose.

A permit to keep domestic rabbits in Queensland can only be approved if the animal is being kept for an approved purpose:

- certain forms of public entertainment (e.g. magic show and circuses)
- scientific and research purposes.

What if it is in a secure enclosure and desexed?

It is often suggested that rabbits should be allowed as pets if they have been desexed and registered. Although desexed and contained rabbits pose minimal risk to the environment and agriculture, there are practical obstacles involved for the mandatory desexing of privately owned animals. Trials elsewhere have not demonstrated that the desexing and registering pets have been effective in reducing unwanted pet populations. Mandatory desexing will also be difficult to enforce and costly to implement.



Rabbits damage crops

What do I do if I have a pet rabbit?

Do not release your rabbit into the wild. You can:

- surrender it to your local government office
- surrender it to Biosecurity Queensland (call 13 25 23)
- dispose of it in a legal and humane way
- contact the Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board to arrange for it to be collected (call 07 4661 4076).

Description

The domestic varieties and the wild (grey) variety of rabbits are the same species, although the domestic varieties have been heavily modified via years of cross-breeding and selection by rabbit enthusiasts.

Although most escaped domestic rabbits are probably killed by feral cats, dogs and foxes, there is evidence that a small proportion of escaped female domestic rabbits will survive and can breed successfully with wild male rabbits.

Wild rabbits were originally imported into Australia in 1859 and released for hunting purposes in Victoria.

The wild rabbit has since spread over most of Australia. There may be over 400 million wild rabbits in Australia today.

Small colonies of domestic rabbit varieties have established on islands, where predators are absent.

Further information

Further information is available from your local government office, or by contacting Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or visit biosecurity.qld.gov.au.



Rabbits can cause damage to residential gardens, land and lawns

This fact sheet is developed with funding support from the Land Protection Fund.

Fact sheets are available from Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) service centres and our Customer Service Centre (telephone 13 25 23). Check our website at biosecurity.qld.gov.au to ensure you have the latest version of this fact sheet. The control methods referred to in this fact sheet should be used in accordance with the restrictions (federal and state legislation, and local government laws) directly or indirectly related to each control method. These restrictions may prevent the use of one or more of the methods referred to, depending on individual circumstances. While every care is taken to ensure the accuracy of this information, DAF does not invite reliance upon it, nor accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by actions based on it.