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## **Rabbits return – new controls needed**

The ongoing problem of rabbits in NSW is back on the agenda, after the NSW Farmers' Association voted to seek increased funding for management of the problem.

NSW Farmers' Association President Charles Armstrong says rabbits are a huge problem for farmers, and there is concern about the ongoing efficacy of previous control measures.

"We welcome recent funding to undertake research into further control measures as we move on from Myxomatosis and the more recent Calicivirus, but this is only part of the solution" Mr Armstrong said.

In August this year, the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre received \$1.5 million in funding to develop new strains of Calicivirus.

However, Mr Armstrong said that additional funding and streamlined approval processes are also needed for on ground control measures such as the ripping of burrows and clearing of dense vegetation around rabbit colonies.

"Grazing and burrowing by rabbits can cause serious erosion problems, threaten the survival of native plants, and modify entire landscapes," he said.

"Rabbits also threaten the survival of a number of native animal species by altering habitat, reducing native food sources, displacing small animals from burrows, and attracting introduced predators such as foxes.

"Rabbits are eaten by introduced predators such as foxes, wild dogs and feral cats, which can result in artificially high populations of these pest animals in some areas. If rabbit numbers decline suddenly the pests turn their attention to native prey, causing 'hyper-predation' impacts on native animals.

"It has been estimated that Australian agriculture loses more than \$200 million a year because of overgrazing by rabbits, and as much as we'd like this issue to be over, it's not. We do need to revisit our options," Mr Armstrong concluded.

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