



Newsletter

April 2016

Dates for the Diary:

Saturday 14th May – Wattle Flat-Pootilla Landcare Group AGM, Dean Hall from 6.00pm

Sunday 19 June – Map Day (more info in next newsletter)

Connecting People, Connecting Landscapes

That's the theme for this year's AGM on Saturday 14th May with our guest speaker Gib Wettenhall OAM.

Gib was awarded the Order of Australia medal for service to conservation and the environment on Australia Day this year. He's practically a local, living up the road at Mollongghip. Through his work Gib aims to improve biodiversity and habitats by including land holders and land managers in the process. Among other things Gib is also involved in the Great Dividing Trail, tree growers group, the Norman Wettenhall Foundation and the Mollongghip Hall rejuvenation. Come along to the Dean Hall on Saturday evening 14th May to meet Gib and hear his story. A short AGM will also be conducted.

The evening commences at 6.00pm for a meal. Bring a one-pot-wonder, casserole, vegies or whatever to share. BYO drinks. Also:

- Door prizes and raffle
- The famous Great Aussie Supper competition. Will your slice/cake/biscuits be awarded the top prize this year?

Location: Dean Hall, Daylesford-Ballarat Road, Dean

Let's talk about Rabbits

Do you have rabbits on or near your property? Do you own a smartphone, tablet or computer? If the answer is yes to both you might enjoy loading **RabbitScan** onto your device and having a play with it. It's free and a great tool for recording rabbit sightings and damage on your property and will allow you to keep track of any increases or decreases over the coming years.

Download Rabbitscan for free;

For Apple iPhones or iPads: at the App Store

For android smartphones or tablets: from Google play

For computers: at the website www.rabbitscan.org.au

And more on Rabbits.....

You may have heard that a new strain of Calicivirus will be released in Australia probably in Autumn 2017. WFPLG has applied to be a release site and we will hear around mid year if we have been successful. To date several members have joined but we are hoping that many more properties will sign up over the next couple of months. A concentrated effort will help rid our district of those pesky rabbits for many years so encourage your neighbours and friends to get involved as well. Ring Stephanie on 5334 8035 for more information or visit www.pestsmart.org.au and register. Refer to the information flier on the last page of this newsletter.

Maintaining the Trail

Two school groups generously offered their time and energy to help with maintenance work of our planting projects along the Yarrowee Trail in February.

Forty Year 12 Outdoor Education students from Copperfield College Caroline Springs and Talangatta Secondary College helped with weeding, reclaiming guard bags and stakes and straightening tree guards. A lot was achieved in a relatively short time. Thanks to the students and teachers involved in this generous contribution to the Yarrowee Trail project.

Russells Dam Cleanup on Cleanup Day

This year 8 members gathered to do a tidy-up along the roadside and water's edge of Russells Dam for Cleanup Australia Day.

Many years ago our landcare group adopted Russells Dam on the Creswick-Bungaree Road as our Clean Up Australia on-going project. Over the years on that Sunday morning in March we've hauled trailer loads of rubbish, fridges, tyres and mattresses off to the tip. The good news is that every year the loads of rubbish decrease. We've also undertaken a weed eradication program and installed 'no dumping' signage to influence would-be dumpers to take their rubbish to the transfer station. Thanks to the Hepburn Shire Council for their on-going support with this activity.

Small Project Grants Available

Planning for a planting? Need to fence off some remnant vegetation? Tackling weeds? There are always opportunities to apply for small project grants for local activities. You need to be a financial member and the group is able to fund up to 50% of total project costs. Contact Anthony Murphy on 5334 5408 to discuss your ideas, obtain an application pack and get your application started.

Committee Contacts

Anthony Murphy, President	5334 5408	John Thomas	5334 5344
Andrew Martin, Treasurer	5334 5225	Jeff Dobell	5334 5487
Stephanie Davison	5334 8035	Maureen Ryan	5334 5447



Boosting rabbit biocontrol: RHDV K5 national release - how you can get involved

Australian governments and industry have joined forces to boost rabbit biocontrol effectiveness in Australia. This has led to a naturally occurring RHDV variant from Korea (RHDV K5) being selected as the proposed next biocontrol agent to be released in Australia. It is currently under assessment by government regulators.

The national release will be coordinated by the Invasive Plants and Animals Committee in consultation with Australian Wool Innovation and Meat and Livestock Australia.

How you can get involved as a monitoring release site

1. Contact your neighbours

The project team is looking for groups of landholders. If you are a landholder wanting to be a release site, the first step should be to contact your neighbours. You can use existing groups for this process, such as your local Landcare group, Catchment Management Authority, Local Land Services or other Natural Resource Management group in your area.

It is important to note that different jurisdictions have different regulations around handling and releasing the virus and you will need to make sure your group contains an authorised person to do this. For example in NSW, this would be your local land services (LLS) officer.

2. Identify a group coordinator

Once you have your group, it is important to identify one person as the group coordinator. Where an existing group has been used, it may be best to use the existing group coordinator (LLS ranger, CMA officer etc). This person will be the point of contact with the project team and will be responsible for collating group data and samples.



Image: Rick Nash

3. Determine what type of site you want to be

There are two types of sites: Release sites and Broad-scale sites. Any site can be a Release site, however there are some minimum requirements for Broad-scale sites.

Broad-scale sites: undertake a three-night spotlight count with a vehicle using standard methods. The transect must be a minimum of 1km and cover at least 25% of the site where release is to take place (such as the paddock). Samples also need to be taken from 20 shot rabbits prior to release.

Release sites: undertake some form of assessment of their rabbit population prior to release (eg spotlight count (walked or driven), dung count). No shot samples are required and there are no minimum site requirements.

All sites are required to collect dead rabbits (where possible) after the release of K5 and redo their rabbit population assessment in the same manner four weeks after the release. There can be a mix of both Release and Broad-scale sites within the one group.

4. Contact the project team

Once your group is coordinated and the site types determined, the group coordinator should register your interest with the project team by filling out the following form:

www.pestsmart.org.au/get-involved-as-a-monitoring-site/

