

Pest control order for foxes

Frequently asked questions

When was the pest control order introduced?

The NSW Government gazetted the Local Land Services (European Red Fox) Pest Control Order 2014 on 4 December 2014, making foxes a declared pest species under the *Local Land Services Act 2013*.

What does the new pest control order mean for farmers and the community?

The European Red Fox is not a native species to Australia, it is an introduced pest and internationally recognised as one of the most serious threats to biodiversity.

In agricultural landscapes foxes are a serious predator of livestock; evidence of lamb losses due to predation by foxes can be as high as 30 per cent¹.

The pest control order (PCO) will better support the coordination of community-wide fox control programs. In certain circumstances, it may allow Local Land Services to issue eradication orders to individual private landholders to eradicate foxes on their land.

Placing a PCO on foxes brings the control of this pest in line with other threats to our environment and agricultural production such as feral pigs and wild dogs.

The PCO also means foxes cannot be kept in captivity without a permit, nor are they allowed to be released into the wild.

What are the benefits of the PCO?

Effective long-term fox management requires the cooperation of a majority of land managers in any one area and the PCO will assist in coordinating fox control programs.

A recent study by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) showed that sheep producers who participated in a collaborative fox baiting program with neighbours were able to increase lamb marking percentages by up to 20 per cent².

Foxes cost Australian farmers more than \$37 million each year in livestock losses³.

The total annual cost of foxes to Australia's environment and economy is estimated to be over \$227.5 million⁴.

Foxes are a vector for rabies and also carry a variety of parasites including Hydatid tapeworms and other parasites which are able to be transmitted to humans, domestic animals and livestock. Hydatids and rabies pose serious human health risks in Australia.

Why can people keep rabbits, but not foxes?

There are long established and growing industries around rabbits including rabbit meat production, Angora rabbit fibre production and the pet rabbit industry. There are no similar industries established around foxes.



¹ Saunders G, Coman B, Kinnear J and Braysher M. (1995) *Managing Vertebrate Pests: Foxes*. Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra.

² McLeod L, Saunders G, McLeod S, Dawson M and Van De Ven R (2010) *The potential for participatory landscape management to reduce the impact of the red fox (Vulpes vulpes) on lamb production*. *Wildlife Research*, 2010, 37, 695–701.

³ McLeod, R (2004) *Counting the Cost: Impact of Invasive Animals in Australia 2004*. Cooperative Research Centre for Pest Animal Control, Canberra.

⁴ McLeod, R (2004) *Counting the Cost: Impact of Invasive Animals in Australia 2004*. Cooperative Research Centre for Pest Animal Control, Canberra.

The wild rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) remains a serious pest, and for this reason it is illegal to keep it as a pet or for commercial purposes. However, other breeds of rabbit may be used for commercial purposes: for their meat (eg New Zealand White, Californian, Flemish etc) or their fibre (eg Angora).

There is a thriving pet rabbit industry in NSW that is covered by a National Code of Practice. Wild rabbits are not for sale in the pet rabbit industry.

Foxes are wild predators that are rarely completely domesticated. Without a concerted effort to domesticate foxes and breeding out the wild traits this species is unsuitable for a domestic pet trade and – irrespective of these challenges – such an industry would pose serious threats to agricultural enterprises and biodiversity in Australia.

Foxes in urban areas can pose a risk to human health due to the transmission of disease and they impact on urban communities by disrupting pet dogs and even killing small household pets.

What does the PCO mean for people who already have foxes for pets?

It is understood that a small number of people presently keep foxes in captivity in NSW. The PCO prohibits the acquiring and keeping of new foxes.

People currently keeping foxes in captivity are able to apply to their Local Land Services for a permit to keep the animal in captivity.

Permits are not allowed for new cases of fox ownership or fox husbandry.

What are the penalties?

Under the *Local Land Services Act 2013*, failure to comply with a PCO is 50 Penalty Units or approximately \$8500.

Failure to register an existing pet fox will result in a 20 Penalty Unit offence which is approximately \$3400 per offence.

Who enforces the PCO?

Local Land Services works with the Department of Primary Industries, landholders, industry and the community to protect biosecurity in NSW.

Under the *Local Land Services Act 2013* all land managers in NSW, whether on public or private land, have an obligation to control declared pest species on their land, which includes foxes under the new PCO.

Land managers are now required under legislation to control foxes and their Local Land Services office can provide advice and assistance with this.

Local Land Services is empowered to serve an individual eradication order in accordance with the Act, requiring the occupier or owner to eradicate the pest by use of a method specified by Local Land Services in the individual eradication order.

How are foxes classified in other parts of Australia?

Fox management on private and public lands other than those controlled by conservation agencies are governed by various State and territory legislation.

In all States of Australia foxes are a declared pest species, feral animal or vermin. Each State has requirements under their relevant legislation for controlling foxes.

What other species are a declared pest in NSW?

Species currently declared pests in NSW are foxes, wild rabbits, wild dogs, feral pigs and a number of locust species (the Australian Plague, Spur-Throated and Migratory).

Under the *Local Land Services Act 2013* all land managers in NSW, whether on public or private land, have an obligation to control declared pest species on their land.