

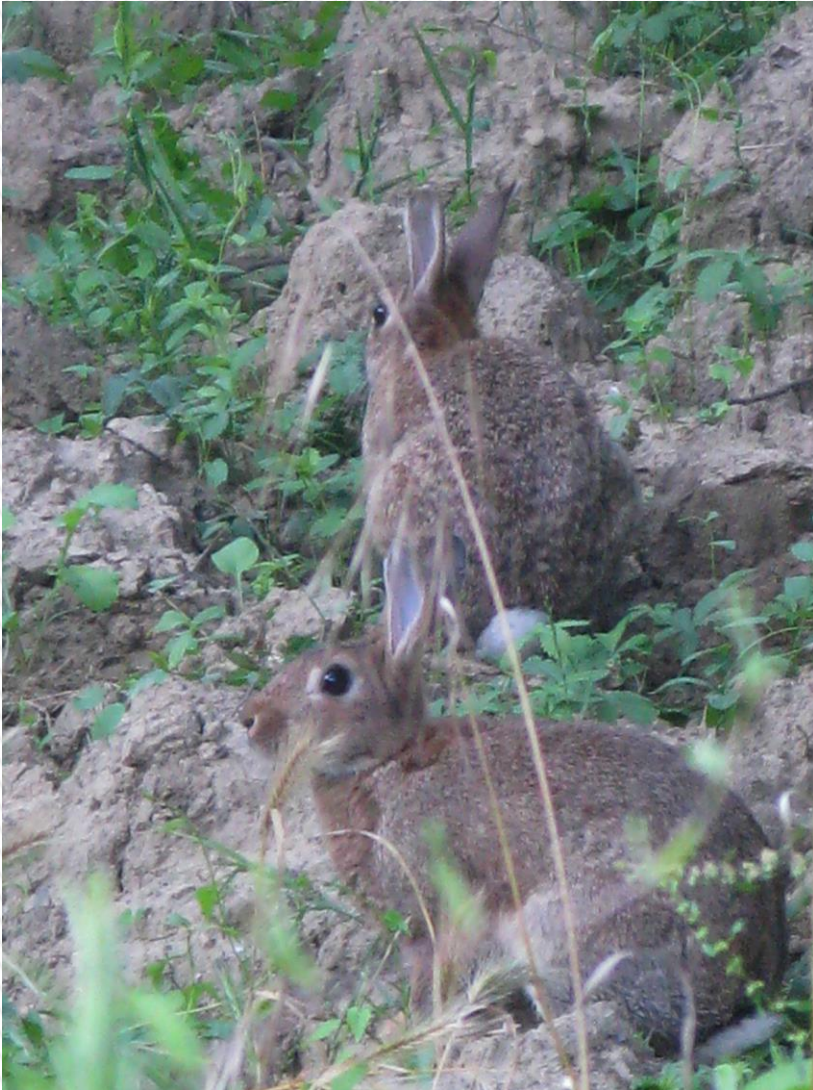
Integrated Rabbit Control

The science of rabbit control ...
and a local story

The Granite Creeks Project Inc.



Rabbits ... Pests?



Identifying the Problem



So these rabbits ARE pests ... what is the evidence ... who cares?

Some Bold Assumptions

- * Rabbits are pests
- * Rabbit populations must be controlled
- * Eradication is an agreed aspirational goal
- * Our discussions are about broad acre holdings

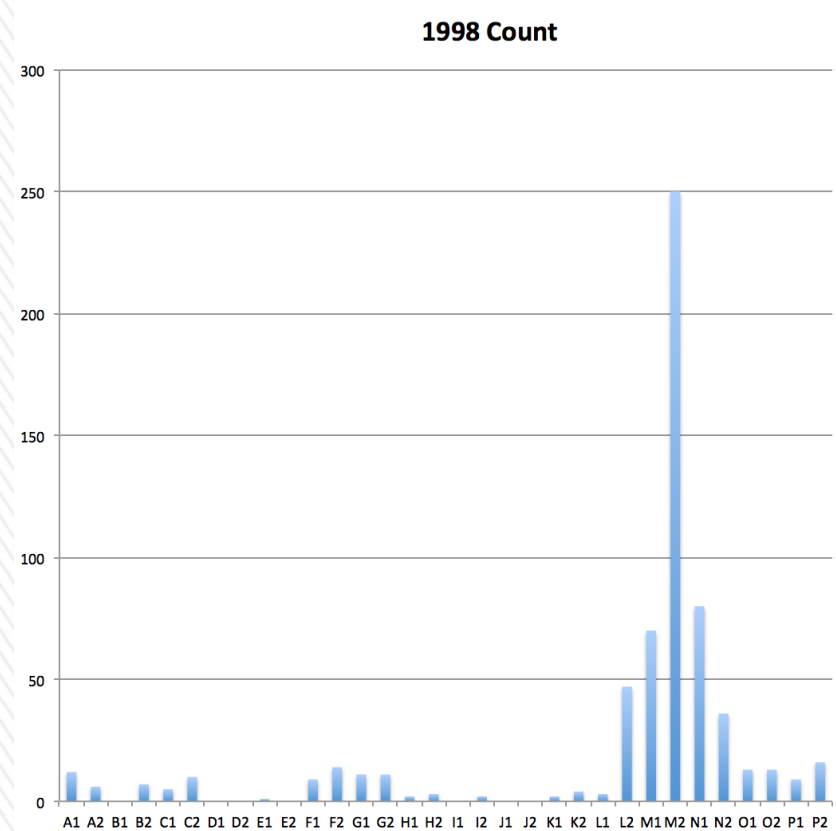
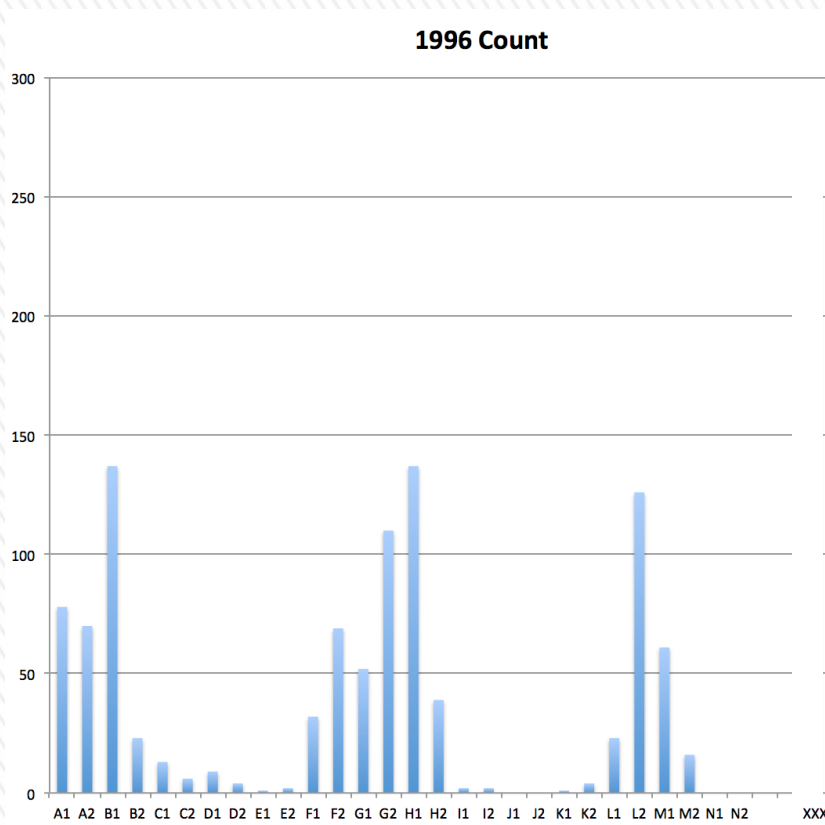


Rabbit Control



Elements of integrated control:

- Monitoring rabbit numbers
Spotlight transects



Rabbit Control



Elements of integrated control:

- Monitoring rabbit numbers

Activity levels in burrows



Rabbit Control



Elements of integrated control:

An active entrance ...
fresh dirt ...
numerous footprints...
lots of dung ...
little to no grass



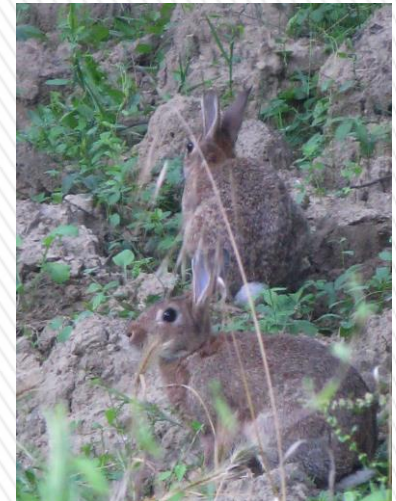
Rabbit Control



Elements of integrated control:

- Monitoring rabbit numbers

Daytime sightings



Rabbit Control



Elements of integrated control:

- Monitoring rabbit numbers

Impact on pasture



Impact on native flora



Rabbit Control



Elements of integrated control:

- Reduction of rabbit populations by poisoning
 - Poisoning using Pindone or 1080 - ACUP requirements



- Take the trail to the rabbits
- Free feed prior to poison
- Monitor the free feed take
- Use less poisoned bait

Rabbit Control



Elements of integrated control:

- Reduction of rabbit populations by fumigation
 - Find all the entrances
 - Clear the face of each hole
 - Fill in all but (about) 3 entrances compacting the dirt to ensure that there is a good seal of dirt on dirt
 - Bury a length of 'poly pipe' in each of the remaining entrances
 - Slide 3 or 4 tablets of fumigant into each pipe ... carefully remove the pipe and seal the holes
 - Check the next day ... then next week



Rabbit Control



Fumigation:

- Extent of a burrow
- Complexity underground
- Importance of finding all entrances
- Clearing the face of the entrances
- Sealing the entrance
- Fumigation is a two or more person job – for safety sake





Undertaking warren destruction

- Prior to starting the ripping
 - Locate all rabbit burrows ... active and inactive ...
'if it looks like a burrow, it is a burrow'
 - Mark where the burrows are ... use surveyor's tape
 - Locate all entrances ... look well beyond the obvious holes
 - Plan the shortest practicable route for the excavator ...
for efficiency ... and value for money
 - Organise someone to be a 'spotter' ... this should be the
person who located the burrows to be ripped and planned
the route

Ripping Rabbit Burrows

Undertaking warren destruction

- Ripping using an excavator ...



- Shifting rocks to access the burrow ...
- Rip and cross rip ...
- A bulldozer can also be used ...
but the equipment must be heavy



Ripping Rabbit Burrows >>>

Undertaking warren destruction

- Track roll to finish off ...

Safety first ...

- before commencing discuss and agree upon operational procedures
- always stand uphill of the excavator
- always be in direct line of sight with the operator
- always stand beyond the reach of the excavator boom



Ripping Rabbit Burrows

Undertaking warren destruction

- An excavator in steep country ...



Ripping Rabbit Burrows

Undertaking warren destruction

- An example of the extent of a burrow ...



Ripping Effectiveness>>>

Small excavator ... take note of:

- the size of the tyne
- the depth of the rip



Ripping Effectiveness>>>

Small excavator

Before ripping



Three weeks later



Ripping Effectiveness

Large excavator ... take note of:

- the size of the tyne
- the depth of the rip
- the reach of the boom



Rabbit Control



Elements of integrated control:

- Monitor treated areas
 - Check ripped burrows for activity
 - Track any rabbits sighted
 - Fumigate any opened burrows
 - Repeat the spotlight transect
- Harbour reduction
 - Eradicate blackberries
 - Eradicate Inkweed
 - Avoid making piles of timber or rocks
 - Rip rabbit burrows

Weeds and Harbour >>>

Inkweed:



One bush – several years old



Detail of leaves



Flower spike and
ripening berries

Excellent rabbit
harbour



Maintaining Biodiversity>>

Avoid this:

Maintain complexity:



Other Tools



Biological control

- Myxomatosis
- RHDV - calicivirus
- RHDV K2 – recently arrived
- RHDV K5 – due for release
- Predators – indigenous and feral

Legal and regulatory requirements

- The CALP Act
- Agency resources – land management officers
- Extension and compliance programs

People power

- Working with neighbouring properties in groups
- Landcare groups
- Local shire
- Departmental agencies
- Catchment Management Authority

Integrated Rabbit Control

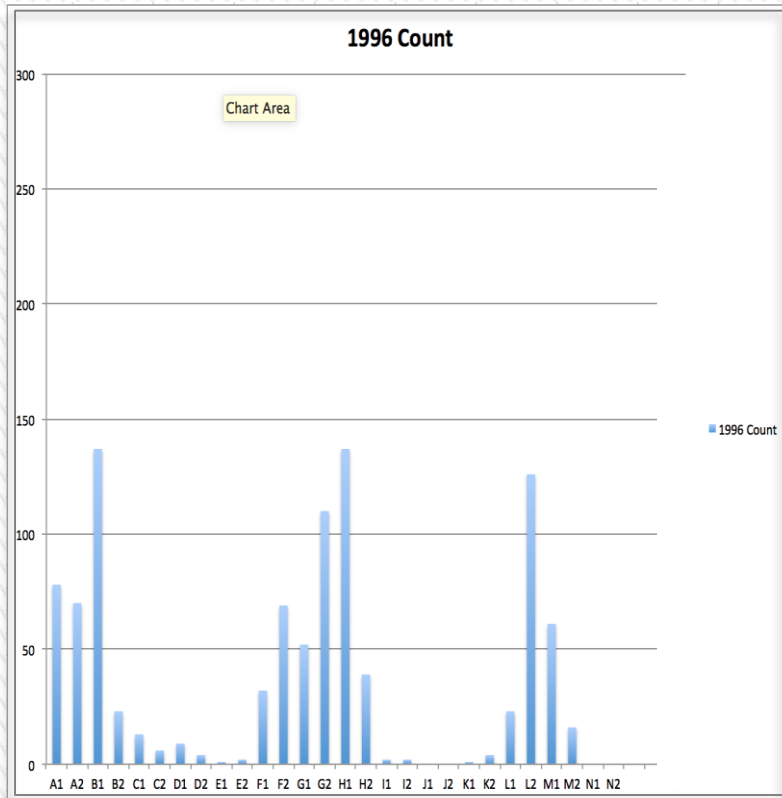
The cycle of the integrated process

- Coordinate your work with neighbours
- Plan your program ... correct timing is critical
- Monitor numbers and activity
- Reduce populations – poison and or fumigate
- Remove rabbit harbour
- Rip rabbit burrows
- Monitor worked areas and fumigate where necessary
- Repeat the cycle
- Maintain communications with everybody

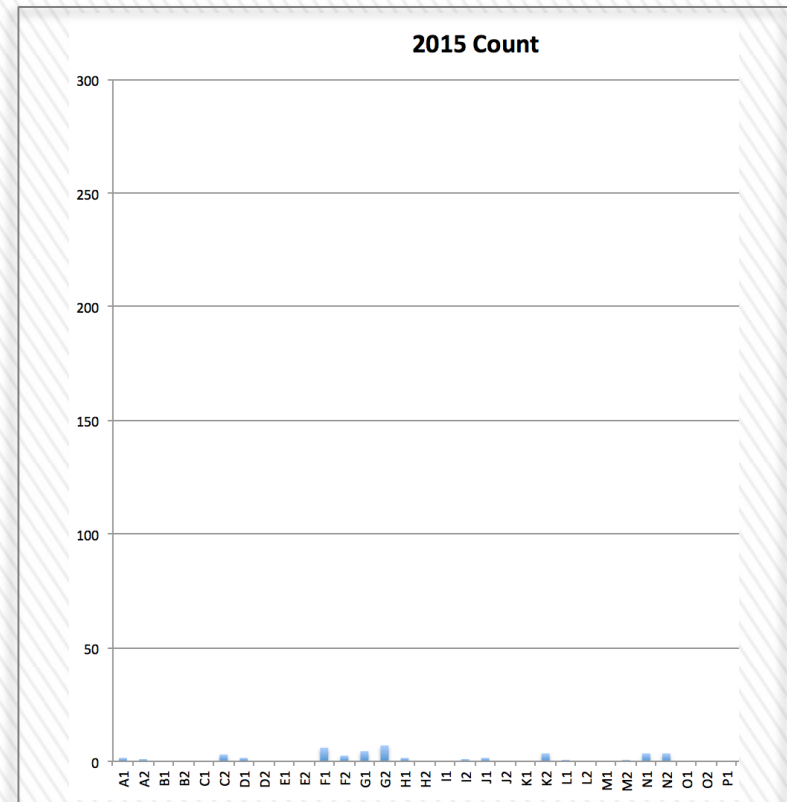
Rabbits are a whole of community responsibility ...

Gooram Valley Spotlight Transect

Spring 1996



Spring 2015

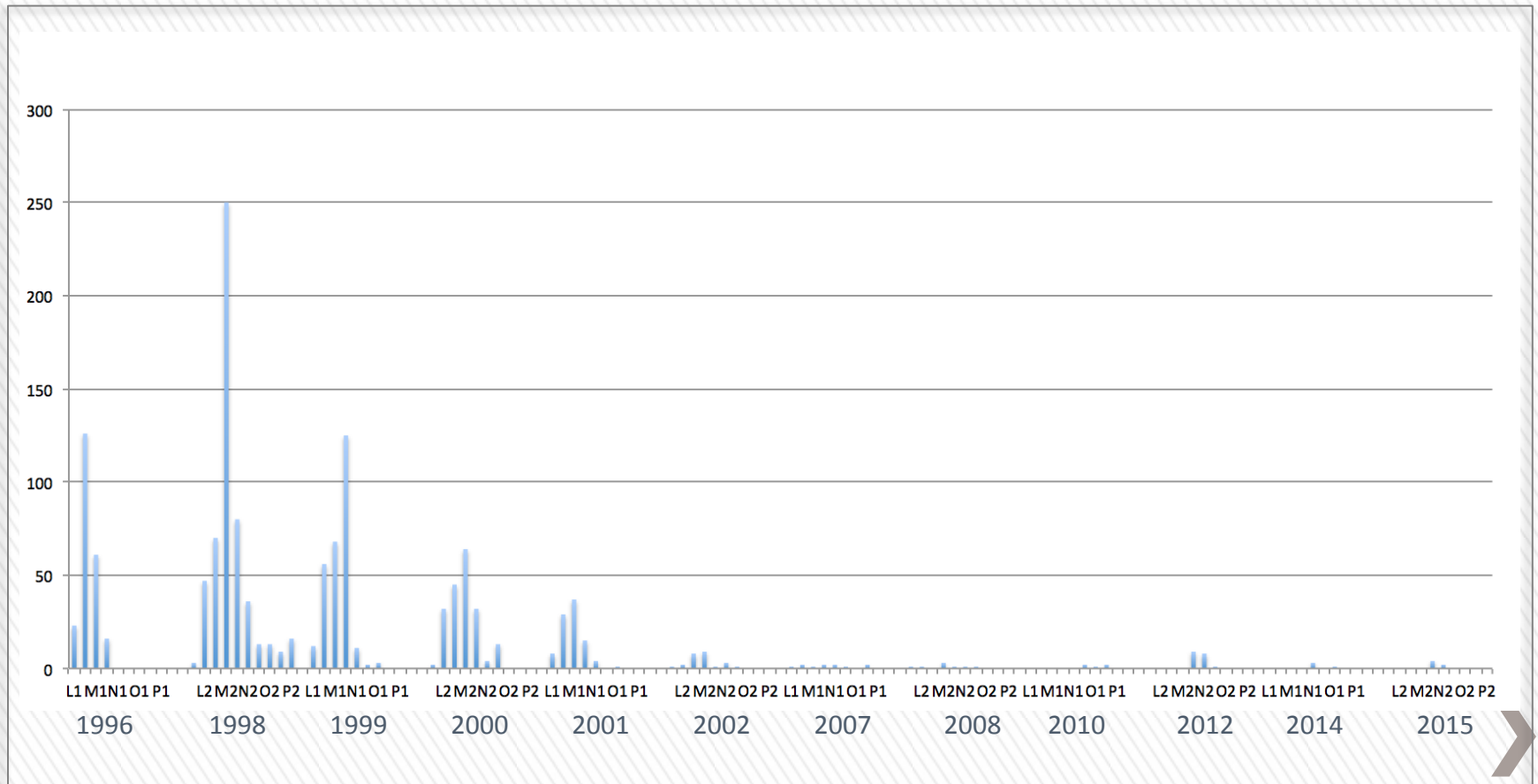


Problem solved ... or do we still have a problem?



Property Analysis

Spring counts from 1996 to 2015



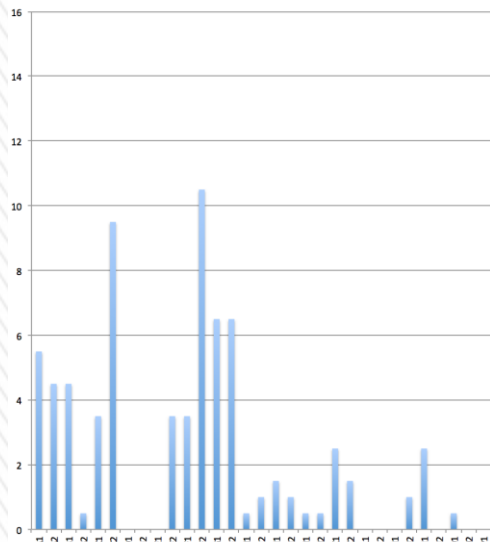
The New Reality

Success is not about the number of dead rabbits ...

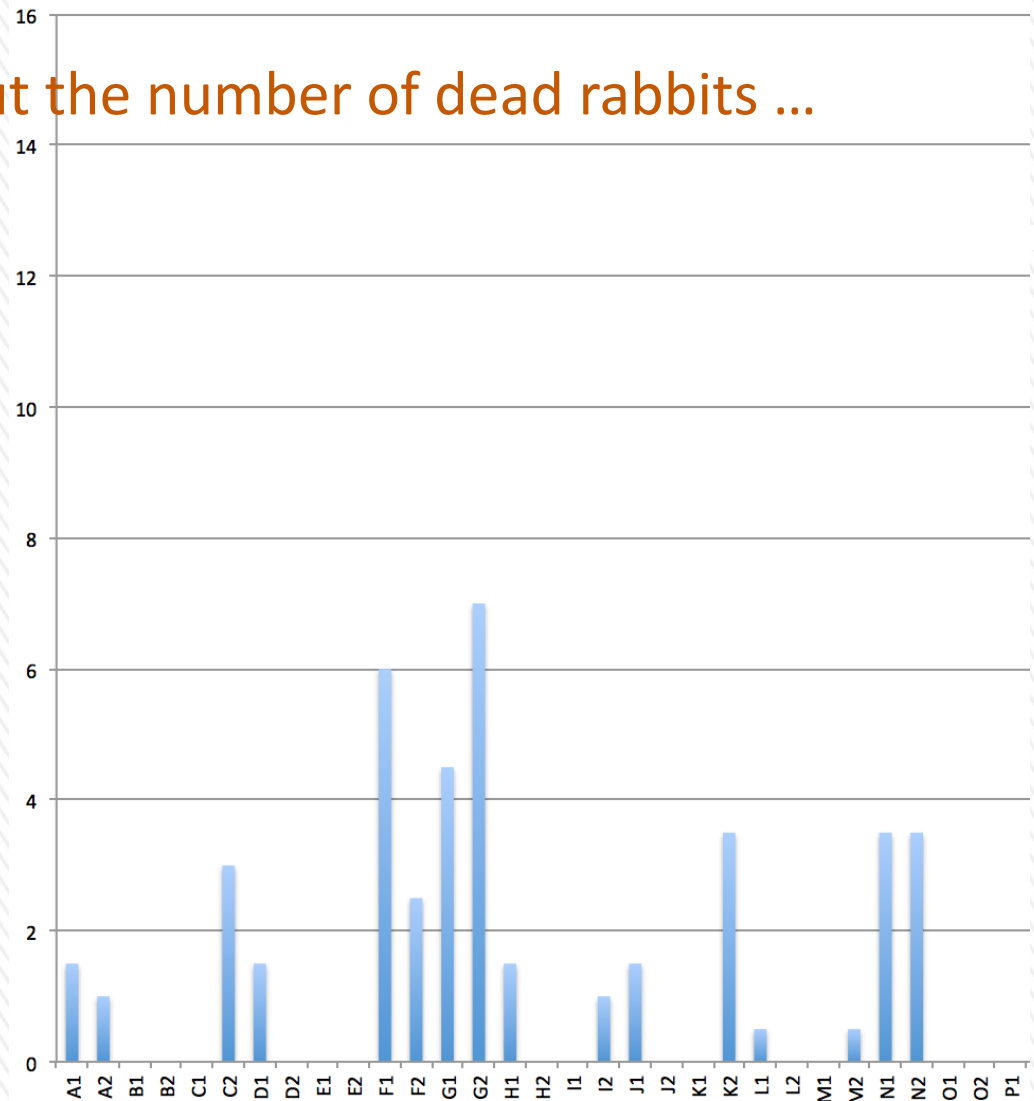
2013 Count



2014 Count



2015 Count



The Granite Creeks Project

Six landcare groups:

- Balmattum/Sheans Creek
- Burnt Creek
- Creightons Creek
- Gooram Valley
- Longwood East
- Strathbogie Tablelands

The Granite Creeks Management Committee:

- Applies annually for funding for the 'Ongoing Pest Plant & Animal Program'
- Employs a coordinator
- Administers and disburses the funds
- Coordinates and supervises the Shire Roadside PPA Control Program

The Granite Creeks Project

The Granite Creeks Management Committee:

- Organises and runs rabbit control field days
- Arranges ACUP courses for community members
- Provides a range of educational opportunities
- Liaises with the Goulburn Broken CMA
- Liaises and plans with DEDJTR
- Along with each of our landcare groups, is an active member of the Gecko CLaN executive and committee
- Supports and actively assists in disaster recovery ...

Some other local landcare groups and networks include:

- Up2Us
- Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative
- Strath Creek
- Glenaroua
- The Nagambie Plains
- Whiteheads Creek

Resources



- www.geckoclan.com.au
- www.pestsmart.org.au
- rabbitaction.com
- www.invasiveanimals.com
- www.feralscan.org.au
- The Ute Guide