****

**Spring Rabbit Control Project in the Shire of Ravensthorpe Commences on August 18**

The Southern Biosecurity Group is set to begin its annual Spring Rabbit Control Project on August 18, which will run until October 31. This initiative is crucial in managing the wild rabbit population, which poses a significant threat to the local ecosystem and agriculture. The project is contingent on favourable weather conditions, which will impact the effectiveness of the control measures implemented.

The Spring Rabbit Control Project will utilize the Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV), commonly known as calicivirus, which is an effective and humane method of controlling rabbit populations. RHDV specifically targets and affects the European rabbit, reducing their numbers significantly in a short period. Pet owners who have rabbits are strongly advised to consult with their veterinarian to ensure their pets' vaccinations against the RHDV are up to date. This will safeguard their rabbits from accidentally contracting the virus during the control project.

* **Understanding RHDV (Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease Virus)**

RHDV is a highly infectious and lethal virus affecting only the European rabbit species. It causes rapid internal bleeding and organ failure, leading to death within 48 to 72 hours post-infection. The virus is transmitted through direct contact between rabbits or indirectly through contaminated surfaces, feed, or insects. Vaccination is the most effective way to protect domestic rabbits from this disease, and it is crucial for pet owners to ensure their rabbits are vaccinated, particularly during the spring and fall control seasons.

Residents are encouraged to support the Spring Rabbit Control Project by ensuring their properties are accessible and by reporting any large infestations of rabbits to the Southern Biosecurity Group. This collaborative effort will help maintain the balance of our local ecosystems and protect our agricultural resources.

For more information on the Spring Rabbit Control Project or to report rabbit sightings, please contact the Southern Biosecurity Group via email at sbg.execofficer@gmail.com, text message at 0484 932 447, or follow their Facebook page, The Southern Biosecurity Group.