

OPEN AGENDA

Copy No:

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Memorandum for Executive Council

SUBJECT

Rabbit Control and Destruction Trial Rules 2018

Memorandum by Chairman, Environment and Natural Resources
Committee

ADVICE SOUGHT

1. **Council is asked to consider and recommend for enactment the Rabbit Control and Destruction Trial Rules, 2018.**

**BACKGROUND &
CONSIDERATIONS**

2. Rabbits constitute a significant risk to the establishment and regeneration of native endemic flora on St Helena. They also have an economic impact on agriculture and could be classified as a pest species.
3. Currently, a mix of control techniques are already employed on St Helena, including shooting, live trapping, warren destruction and rabbit fencing. Poison baiting is not currently practiced but has the potential to be one of the most cost effective, efficient and successful ways to control rabbits. A trial is proposed to investigate the feasibility and cost effectiveness of poison baiting in comparison with the other methods currently employed. The result of this trial would inform a future strategy on integrated pest management across St Helena.
4. It is proposed that Governor in Council issues Rules, specific to the control of rabbits, under the Agriculture and Livestock Improvement Ordinance (Section 5 gives power to the Governor in Council to make rules for the purpose of “the control and destruction of insect, fungus or other pest destructive to crops, plants or livestock”).
5. The proposed Rules allow the use of poison baiting for rabbits (in addition to those methods already employed) for a trial period from February 2018 to December 2018 with the specific aim of collecting information on the effectiveness of the use of pindone poison in controlling rabbit populations.
6. The proposed Rules limit the use of poison to specific trial sites which have been reviewed and approved by ANRD and: (i) take all reasonable precautions to prevent access by non-target animals; and (ii) mitigate against the possibility of secondary poisoning.

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7. There is a copy of the proposed Rules enclosed with this memo at Annex A and a copy of the rabbit control zones at Annex B.
- FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**
8. The cost of the trial will be met from existing resources allocated to Landscape and Ecology Mitigation Programme (LEMP).
- ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS**
9. If the trial is successful and poison baiting is adopted as a long-term method of rabbit control, it is expected to be more cost-effective than the existing methods.
- CONSISTENCY WITH INVESTMENT POLICY PRINCIPLES**
10. Not Applicable.
- PUBLIC/SOCIAL IMPACT**
11. There is a potential impact for public safety when using poison baiting. The Rules contain provisions to mitigate these risks and they can be further mitigated by public communications and awareness of the areas included in the trial (as set out below).
- ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**
12. The proposed Rules contain provisions to mitigate any unintended environmental impact (potentially environmental contamination and the possibility of primary and secondary poisoning of non-target animals) during the trial. The aim of the trial is to foster the establishment and regeneration of the native and endemic flora by investigating whether poison baiting is a more effective means of controlling rabbit populations. The trial will therefore support objectives (a) and (d) of the Environmental Protection Ordinance, 2016:
- (a) Protecting and conserving biodiversity and the habitats, ecosystems and ecological systems that support biodiversity.
- (d) Conserving and enhancing natural beauty and geological and physiographical features of special interest.
- PREVIOUS CONSULTATION / COMMITTEE INPUT**
13. The proposal to undertake the trial and amend the law was discussed by the Environment and Natural Resources Committee (ENRC) on 21st September 2017. ENRC supported the proposal. Advice has also been sought from the SH veterinarian and suggested amendments were reviewed by the Environment and Natural Resources Committee (ENRC) on 18th January 2018. ENRC proposed to continue to support the trial but with the use of an anticoagulant poison (pindone) only and to exclude the use of an acute poison (1080 also known as sodium fluoroacetate) due to the risk posed to humans and non-target animals. The proposed Rules provide for the trial project and consultation will be held following the outcome of the trial to determine the future policy on rabbit control.
- PUBLIC**
14. Some sections of the public may be unhappy about the

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REACTION

destruction of rabbits but most can be expected to accept that a trial of these measures is needed to protect the native endemic flora on St Helena and agricultural crops.

PUBLICITY

15. Press releases and radio interviews will be done to provide information to the general public to inform them of the trial, including publication of the areas where the bait stations will be used and the measures needed to ensure pets are not affected by the bait. Signs will also be erected at the bait stations to inform the general public of any health and safety considerations and to explain why the trial is taking place as well as to provide contact details should they have any questions or concerns.

SUPPORT TO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

16. This paper supports the “Altogether Greener” National Goal in the 10 Year Plan: *We will protect endemic fauna and flora and our agricultural sector by tackling invasive species*; and the “Altogether Wealthier” Goal: *We will continue to invest in the agriculture and fisheries sectors*.

OPEN AGENDA ITEM

17. This item is recommended for the open agenda.

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29.01.18