

Compliance Strategy 2026-2029

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1. Introduction

The Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board (DDMRB) is an Invasive Animal Board established under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* (the Act). The DDMRB is a statutory body of the Queensland Government and is responsible for taking reasonable steps to ensure the DDMRB area (Figure 1), which includes Ipswich City, Toowoomba Regional, Lockyer Valley Regional, Scenic Rim Regional, Southern Downs Regional, City of Gold Coast, Logan City, and Western Downs Regional Council areas, is free from the impacts of rabbits. The Board meets its responsibilities through the maintenance and upgrade of the 555 km rabbit barrier fence, and the provision of compliance activities. The compliance activities seek to prevent the spread of rabbits through education and awareness raising as well as through the provision of expertise and technical information to assist landholders to control rabbits on their land.

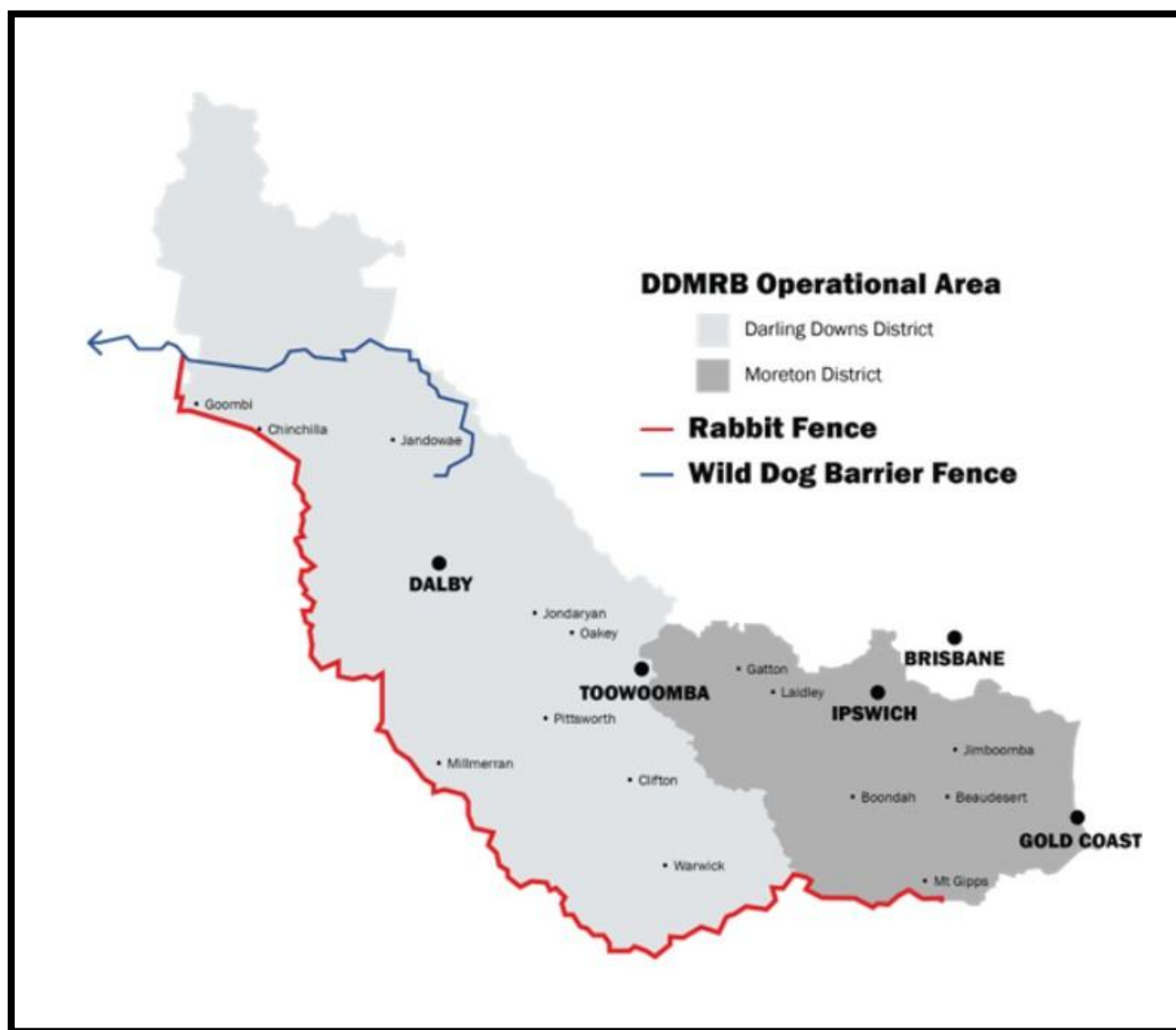


Figure 1: DDMRB operational area.

European Rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) are restricted animals (Categories 3, 4, 5 and 6) under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*.

The Act, and the Biosecurity Regulation 2016 (the Regulation), provides powers for the management of declared pests in Queensland. Specific provisions include powers for the DDMRB to maintain the rabbit fence, and to appoint authorised persons who in turn have the powers to inspect land, require landholders to undertake rabbit control, and to seize rabbits kept unlawfully.

2. Compliance Vision

Empowered land managers, informed communities, and innovative technologies working together to achieve a rabbit-free region.

3. Purpose

This compliance strategy details how the DDMRB approaches and communicates its compliance activities. It aims to build and deliver a robust compliance approach that meets DDMRB's strategic objectives and statutory obligations while growing stakeholder and community confidence in the DDMRB.

This strategy has been developed with reference to and in alignment with:

- *Biosecurity Act 2014* and the Biosecurity Regulation 2016
- Queensland Invasive Plants and Animals Strategy 2025-2030
- National Threat Abatement Plan for Rabbits
- DDMRB Strategic Plan 2025-2029

This strategy has a four-year duration and applies from 2026 to 2029, with reviews conducted annually or as required.

4. Capability Statement

The Darling Downs–Moreton Rabbit Board (DDMRB) delivers a strong, fair, and transparent compliance program that protects our region from the impacts of rabbits. Our approach combines education, engagement, and enforcement to help land managers meet their biosecurity obligations under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*.

We invest in staff training and knowledge sharing to ensure our team is skilled and responsive. By using innovative tools and exploring emerging technologies, we improve monitoring and reporting, making compliance easier and more efficient for everyone.

In addition to compliance oversight, we have the capability to undertake rabbit control work on a fee-for-service basis, removing barriers for land managers. Our services include warren destruction, harbour removal, wire netting, fumigation, and rubbish removal. We operate specialised equipment—including a dump truck, excavator and skid steer—with qualified staff to deliver safe, effective, and timely solutions.

Our risk-based framework ensures resources are directed where they matter most, while partnerships with communities and stakeholders build trust and support voluntary compliance. Through clear communication, practical advice, and timely action, we work together to achieve a rabbit-free region.

5. Monitoring and Evaluating Emerging Technologies

The DDMRB is committed to leveraging innovation to strengthen compliance capabilities and operational efficiency. We will actively monitor and evaluate new and emerging technologies that have the potential to:

- Enhance operational efficiency by streamlining compliance activities and reducing manual effort.
- Improve safety for staff and stakeholders during field operations.
- Deliver value for money through cost-effective solutions that maximize impact.

To ensure informed decision-making, the DDMRB will seek external funding opportunities to support proof-of-concept projects before committing to purchase or implementation. These projects will allow us to test technologies in real-world conditions, assess their effectiveness, and identify any operational challenges.

A key technology currently under consideration is the use of drones equipped with thermal imaging capabilities. This innovation could significantly improve our ability to locate rabbit breeding places across large rural and peri-urban properties, enabling faster and more targeted compliance responses. The technology also has the potential to allow damage assessments of the rabbit barrier fence to be performed after significant events such as bushfire and storms without placing staff in danger.

DDMRB is exploring the use of monitoring cameras to support evidence-based compliance by monitoring rabbit populations, movement pathways, and the effectiveness of barrier fencing and grid complexes. The use of cameras and/or drones is targeted, risk-based and undertaken only where it is the most appropriate and proportionate method to achieve biosecurity outcomes. Imagery collected on public or private land is reviewed using artificial intelligence solely to identify the target species. Images containing the target species are retained on a secure server, while all other images are deleted as soon as practicable. Where retained imagery incidentally captures a person or makes a location readily identifiable, it is modified to obscure identifying features. DDMRB applies privacy-by-design principles and considers privacy impacts when planning, trialling or expanding the use of camera and AI-enabled technologies. Images are typically used only for operational analysis or educational purposes, and imagery from private land is not published or shared without the prior consent of the landholder.

Our approach will remain adaptive, ensuring that lessons learned from trials inform future investments and integration into our compliance framework.

6. Our Compliance Approach

Our compliance approach is informed, strategic and consistent across the DDMRB operational area so that our stakeholders and their communities can have confidence in what we do.

Delivering education and guidance, promoting behaviour change and obtaining compliance is the main purpose of our approach.

We are part of a network of rabbit management practitioners from across Australia including:

- National Rabbit Management Coordinator
- Australian Rabbit Managers Network
- Rabbit Free Australia
- Peri-urban Rabbit Forum.

Involvement in these groups broadens our knowledge and rabbit management practice, contributes to improved adoption of best practice management nationally, and helps build social licence.

We address compliance across a continuum from educating and guiding, through to enforcement. We aim to engage land managers early to help them meet their biosecurity obligations as set out in legislation.

Our primary aim is to promote voluntary compliance through a range of educational activities aimed at building the capacity and capability of land managers, including:

- providing site-specific information, resources and tools that clearly articulate obligations and empower action;
- engaging with land managers, stakeholders and their communities to promote awareness of the need for rabbit control, deliver a consistent message on the importance of finding and removing breeding places and harbour, and build their capacity through site visits, meetings and field days;
- engaging with the community to promote awareness of the restrictions regarding the keeping of rabbits;
- promoting and reinforcing the benefits of voluntary compliance and the potential consequences of non-compliance; and,
- where voluntary compliance is not achieved, we take a risk-based approach to decide how best to respond.

Our compliance approach includes five strategies that allow us to be consistent in our regulatory activities: inform, educate, enable, monitor and enforce (see figure 2 below).

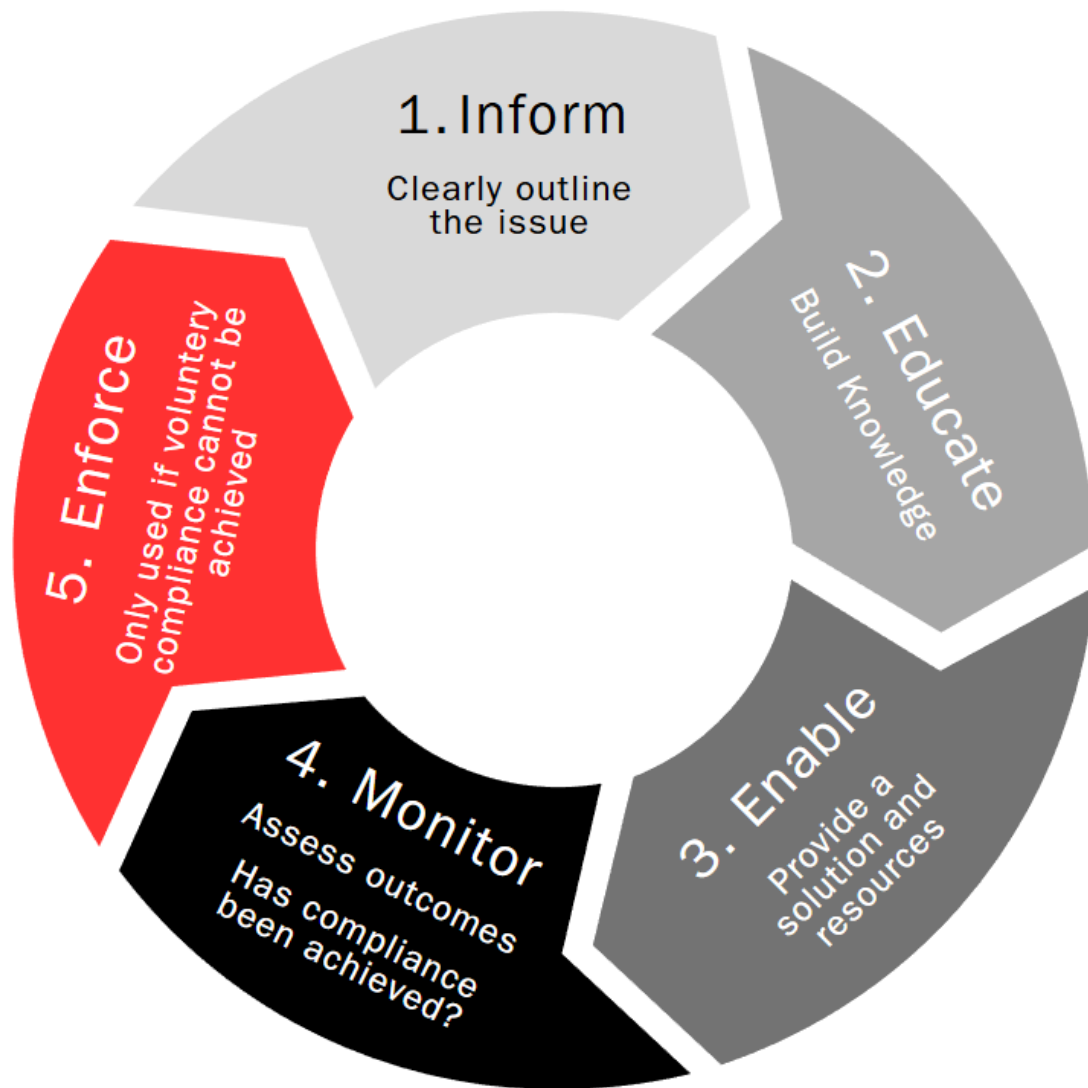


Figure 2: The five strategies employed during compliance activities and their relationships.

We inform, educate, and enable land managers and monitor their progress towards outcomes on an ongoing basis. When these strategies fail to achieve voluntary compliance then enforcement options or interventions are considered.

The table below shows our risk-based approach to enforcement and the things we consider when deciding the best way to respond to instances of non-compliance. We won't hesitate to take strong compliance action where a high-risk non-compliance occurs.



Inform / Educate / Enable	Educate / Enable/ Enforce	Enable/Enforce	Enforce
- Rabbits posing a minimal biosecurity risk to neighbours, infrastructure, the environment or broader community - Actions unintentional - Land manager wants to comply - Offer advice and provide options on how to eradicate rabbits/harbour from property - May require formal advice letter - No further compliance action required in most instances	- Rabbits posing a minor biosecurity risk to neighbours, infrastructure, the environment or broader community - Actions unintentional - Land manager is generally compliant and rectifies issues within requested timeframes - Provide advice and options along with a reasonable timeframe to respond and rectify - Response may include a formal advice letter	- Rabbits posing a major biosecurity risk to neighbours, infrastructure, the environment or broader community - Land manager has a history of minor non-compliance - Land manager demonstrates a lack of willingness to comply - Change in behaviour required - Provide advice and options along with a reasonable timeframe to rectify - Response likely to include a formal advice and/or Biosecurity Order	- Rabbits having a major impact on neighbours, infrastructure, the environment and/or broader community - Person keeping rabbit(s) without a permit* - Seriousness of the biosecurity risk may require going straight to enforcement regardless of compliance history - Land managers has an ongoing history of non-compliance - Land manager is wilfully non-compliant - Response likely to use Biosecurity Orders, Penalty Infringement Notices and/or rectification at land manager's expense

* The keeping of rabbits without a permit is an offence and as such requires an immediate compliance response to reduce the risk of the animals being relocated or released into the wild. If a seized rabbit is healthy, it is typically rehomed interstate via the Queensland Animal Welfare League or RSPCA.

Expanding on our compliance strategies:

1. Inform

- communicate our compliance approach, including our priorities and how we monitor and assess compliance
- educate and support land managers and the community to help them understand their obligations and to support compliance, taking a 'no surprises' approach
- help land managers and the community understand the consequences of non-compliance and the range of compliance tools that the DDMRB can employ

2. Educate

- Use a range of contemporary tools to educate land managers and the community on rabbit ecology and impacts, strategies to prevent rabbits establishing, and awareness of the restrictions on keeping rabbits
- Provide site-specific, best practice advice, aimed at achieving the most efficient level of control

3. Enable

- communicate clearly with land managers and the community about what they need to do and build relationships with them
- encourage compliance and use a range of tools to support land managers and the community to comply
- engage with our key stakeholders on compliance and look for avenues for cooperation and support
- have a strong presence, including staff participating in workshops, meetings and field days
- use technology to simplify our reporting and communicate the outcomes to the community

4. Monitor

- use technology to monitor, review and report on compliance
- explore the use of new and emerging technologies to improve our monitoring capabilities and operational efficiency
- use the outcomes from our monitoring to inform our compliance planning, priorities and risks
- maintain awareness of up-to-date compliance methods and opportunities to continually improve our compliance approach

5. Enforce

- use a suite of compliance tools and interventions to respond to non-compliance
- respond to issues and any alleged non-compliance as they arise
- use a proactive, outcomes-focused, targeted, risk-based approach for our compliance activities
- consider the nature, impact, severity, circumstance and culpability of the non-compliance when deciding how we respond

7. Compliance Principles

We use the following principles to guide our compliance approach.

1. **consistent and fair:** we have a consistent and fair approach to how we achieve compliance
2. **outcomes and risk-based:** we use a proactive, outcomes-focused, targeted, risk-based approach for our compliance activities
3. **supportive:** we encourage land managers and the community to do the right thing and empower staff to make decisions within our compliance framework
4. **adaptive:** we monitor our progress and adjust our actions as needed
5. **accountable and transparent:** we do what we say we are going to do, are transparent in our decision making and talk openly about priorities, activities and the results of our work
6. **safe and well:** we support the safety and wellbeing of our staff, land managers and the community
7. **responsive:** we are timely in how we communicate about compliance and in responding to non-compliance
8. **efficient:** we provide the full suite of compliance services including a fee for service option, to provide a one-stop shop for landholders, to make our operations as efficient as possible, and provide value for money to our funding partners

8. How we manage and support compliance

The DDMRB aims for compliance activities to be outcomes-based and continually works to ensure the outcomes from compliance activities meet our statutory obligations and the expectations of our stakeholders and broader community. These outcomes inform all elements of our compliance planning process and are what we aim to achieve through our compliance activities.

We aim to remove barriers to compliance for land managers and our stakeholders by providing education and the option for efficient, cost effective, best practice rabbit control on a fee for service basis.

It is critical that our staff have the capability to operate effectively to support the DDMRB's role of effectively managing rabbits in our operational area. We continually enhance our skills and knowledge, explore new and emerging technologies, and have mechanisms in place to build the capacity of our staff.

9. Our compliance priorities

The DDMRB receives reports of rabbit activity from a variety of sources including members of the public, our stakeholders, government agencies and by undertaking landscape scale surveys. We take a risk-based approach to plan where to focus our compliance efforts within the Board's operational area so that we address areas of greatest risk and ensure our responses to non-compliance are targeted and proportionate.

To do that, we consider a range of factors including, severity of impact, proximity to susceptible industries or sensitive environmental areas, habitat suitability and previously acquired data on rabbit activity in the area. The priorities and risk areas will vary across the DDMRB operational area. This approach ensures that the DDMRB is transparent in how it allocates resources to best meet its statutory obligations and stakeholder expectations.

10. Monitoring rabbit populations adjacent to the Board's operational area

The DDMRB recognises that rabbit populations outside the Board's operational area may influence future biosecurity risk within the region, particularly where populations occur near the rabbit barrier fence, adjoining local government boundaries, transport corridors or areas with suitable harbour. While the Board's statutory compliance role is focused within its operational area, monitoring external rabbit activity supports early risk identification, preparedness, stakeholder engagement and informed compliance planning.

This monitoring also provides an evidence base to support consideration of any future expansion of the Board's operational area. Understanding rabbit distribution, abundance and persistence in areas adjacent to the current operational boundary will assist the DDMRB, its funding partners and relevant decision-makers to assess whether a boundary expansion may be justified, practical and proportionate to the level of biosecurity risk.

The DDMRB does not have compliance responsibilities outside its operational area and is not funded to undertake routine rabbit management activities outside that area. For this reason, monitoring of adjacent areas will be limited, targeted and primarily desktop-based, with field activity restricted to a small number of strategic sites and undertaken only where it can be delivered efficiently within available resources.

The proposed monitoring program includes:

- receiving rabbit report data from RabbitScan, the Atlas of Living Australia and Biosecurity Alerts;
- reviewing Queensland Department of Primary Industries pest distribution survey mapping;
- requesting rabbit report data from the complaint management systems of Somerset, South Burnett, Toowoomba, Western Downs and Southern Downs Regional Councils;
- conducting biannual autumn and spring field surveys at four strategic sites in each of the following areas: northern Toowoomba, southern South Burnett and southern Somerset;
- using a mix of driving transects and rapid rabbit survey methods, informed by Cooke and McPhee (2007); and
- compiling data received from citizen science platforms, Councils and field surveys in the Fulcrum App for analysis.

The results will be used to identify emerging rabbit activity adjacent to the Board's operational area, inform discussions with neighbouring local governments and State agencies, support strategic planning, and provide a defensible evidence base for any future consideration of changes to the Board's operational boundary. Monitoring information may also inform education, communication and preparedness activities within the DDMRB operational area where external rabbit populations present a foreseeable risk.

11. Monitoring, reporting and evaluating compliance

We take a proactive approach to how we monitor compliance so that we can quickly respond to risks and impacts.

We use a range of methods to monitor compliance including contact with the community and our stakeholders, a variety of data sources, analysis of satellite imagery, and property inspections. We also aim to stay abreast of new research and emerging technologies that could enhance our operational capabilities and efficiency. This approach means we know what is happening and can take appropriate action to respond, as needed.

We ensure that we consistently communicate and report our compliance activities and outcomes to our local government partners and other stakeholders. Consistent reporting allows us to track and measure our performance. We use the information gained to establish compliance levels, identify trends, understand areas of risk, and to continually improve.