

IN BRIEF

A CONTRACEPTIVE FOR KANGAROOS?

In many rural fringe areas, kangaroo numbers have increased enormously. Paddocks and orchards for grazing, bushland for loafing and plenty of fresh water from troughs (and even bird baths!), together with protection from predation, have meant that many places have more roos than the environment can support. They can cause overgrazing in remnant bushland, inhibit regeneration (see WW 10/2), and come into conflict with vehicles on suburban roads. Clearly, the population needs to be kept to a sustainable size, but how to do this is both difficult and controversial in such situations.



Wild roos at a bird bath. Helena Valley.

Researchers in Canberra are working on a method of control that could provide a safe and humane answer. Grasslands in the ACT's nature parks are home to between

450 and 500 kangaroos per square kilometre, the highest recorded density anywhere in Australia, and they cause more than 600 road accidents in a year. (Although economists tend to think only of the cost to the cars, think of the cost to the kangaroos.) So what can be done to manage this population? They are researching an oral contraceptive that can be applied to the grass where roos feed.

If it works, it can be managed carefully to affect only the target animal and will cause no distress to the existing animals. Perhaps there is a research topic for a WA student in this?