



Rabbit Rescue, Control and Management

Abandoned Rabbits

Review

Update 140119



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INTRODUCTION



RABBITATS Rescue Society

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(2018) -- Rabbitats Rescue Society is a volunteer-run registered non-profit society that promotes rabbit control and sanctuary rescue for abandoned pet rabbits and their feral offspring.

We map and monitor loose pets and feral colonies.

We develop predator-proof, sustainable, visually appealing and gently interactive environments focusing on low maintenance and sustainable care.

We seek out non-traditional destinations for adoptions and relocations.

The organization was formed by key entities involved in the relocation of close to 1000 rabbits from the University of Victoria campus in 2010/2011.

Rabbitats recently removed 400 rabbits from the Richmond Auto Mall.

The organization built and maintains a sanctuary in South Surrey, BC, and has implemented a number of smaller 'rabbitats' around the lower mainland.

A larger sanctuary in Richmond is in development.



What Is A Feral Rabbit?

- Rabbitats considers rabbits 'feral' when they are born outside and not contained.
- "Abandoned pets" are rabbits born in captivity and then set loose; the ferals are the offspring of abandoned pets.
- We differentiate between feral rabbits, house rabbits and farm or hutch rabbits because we try to provide housing based on their comfort zones. A rabbit born outside prefers outside, house-born rabbits prefer life inside. (Farm and hutch rabbits can go either way).
- Ferals still like to stay near humans (and away from predators) and remain friendly – as Charles Darwin once observed "no animal is more difficult to tame than the young of the wild rabbit; scarcely any animal is tamer than the young of the tame rabbit."
- A rabbit showing no fear may still be feral while a skittish one may be a dumped pet, but the differences between wild and domesticated are profound.
- Recent studies show domestic rabbits have substantially different brain structures than their wild European brethren.



History

- The initial results of the Abandoned Rabbits mapping project and history research showing the progression of the invasive rabbits are alarming.
- Why are the rabbits a problem now when they weren't before?
- This is a question that needs more study, but it's a new issue likely influenced by the formation of the House Rabbit Society 30 years ago successfully promoting rabbits as house pets, leading to more rabbits and more abandonment.
- British Columbia is one of the worst areas on the continent for uncontrolled feral rabbit populations thanks in part to its favourable climate, but also likely due to a lack of control in a number of communities.
- Municipalities that picked up stray rabbits as part of their animal control have not had the same issues experienced by those who have not.
- Even in their native lands overseas, there are no feral colonies of pet rabbits, they are controlled by predators and the communities, eg: sightings of strays are often reported by the media.
- Rabbits are now also thriving in Nevada, California, Oregon, Alberta, Ontario and Nova Scotia.



Invasive Species

- The rabbits are classified as an invasive alien species.
- It only took Australia 50 years to go from the release of 24 rabbits in to needing a 3,256 km rabbit-proof fence so there is good reason for this.
- However, even the Invasive Species Council and recent programs announced by both the City of Richmond and the Province of BC fail to mention the domestic rabbits, much less allot funds to help with their control.
- The have, however, conducted educational campaigns and printed information sheets warning people not to release their pets.



Invasive Species Action Month Don't Let it Loose

June 2015

FACT SHEET

Invasive species are moving across BC and Canada at a rapid pace:

- In Canada, invasive species include at least 27% of all vascular plants, 181 insects, 24 birds, 26 mammals, 2 reptiles, 4 amphibians, several fungi and molluscs, and 55 freshwater fish.
- The cost of invasive species to Canada is between \$16.6 billion and \$34.5 billion per year. Invasive species cause increased maintenance costs to public parks and private property, devaluing real estate.
- Just six invasive plants caused an estimated combined damage of at least \$65 million in 2008. With further spread, impacts will more than double to \$139 million by 2020.
- Some of the most serious invasive species were originally sold as pets or plants for water gardens and aquariums.



Releasing pets into the wild is both inhumane and dangerous:

- British Columbia is home to several introduced invasive pet species; pet owners release these species thinking it is a humane way to get rid of the animal.
- Although most released exotic pets will die from starvation or be killed by a predator or a car, however several species have the ability to thrive and reproduce in their new environment. Along with impacts on the environment, releasing invasive species has many economic and social impacts.
- Releasing an exotic pet into an unsuitable habitat is considered animal cruelty and charges can be laid (BC SPCA).
- Charges for neglecting a pet, including releasing it into the wild, can include a fine up to \$10,000 and/or up to 18 months in prison (BC SPCA).
- The following exotic pet and plant species are commonly released into the wild, and have had serious impacts on BC's native ecosystems and natural flora and fauna:
 - Red Eared Slider Turtles
 - European Rabbit
 - Goldfish
 - Eurasian Watermilfoil
 - Parrot Feather
 - American Bullfrog
 - Brazilian Elodea
 - Koi Carp
- Plants and animals should never be released into the wild: For information on actions to take visit www.bcinvasives.ca and www.bcinvasivesmonth.com
- Any sightings of these or other invasive species should be reported to the local invasive species committee. (<http://bcinvasives.ca/about/partners/>).



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Environment
Foundation



TOGETHER • PREVENT • RESTORE

Who Is Responsible For the Rabbits?

- Cats and dogs are simply 'pets,' but rabbits are classified as pets, farm animals and wildlife leading to confusion and large cracks in the system.
- Provincial policy greatly contributed to the feral rabbit issue.
- While pets and farm rabbits fall under the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations deemed loose domestic rabbits 'wildlife' (Schedule C) when 'not continuously contained since birth'.
- Until recently, they stated that a permit application was required to pick up even recently abandoned pets, but permits weren't granted unless the rabbits were exported to the U.S thus handcuffing non-profit rescues.
- It also created confusion at the municipal level, while some shelters practiced rabbit control, many others did not, citing the provincial 'wildlife' designation.
- We do NOT support the wildlife designation nor this ministry's control of the rabbits as it's creating confusion, loopholes and ambiguous responsibilities .
- Most recently actions dealing with a virus affecting domestic rabbits that would normally fall under agriculture ended up with FLNRORD because the first rabbits affected were feral, creating a greatly fragmented response.
- Our position has nothing to do with 'saving' the rabbits, any government can order them destroyed, but everything to do with consistency and cutting red tape.



Provincial Support

- We are currently asking the province to remove the rabbits from Schedule C and failing that, we are asking that the restrictions be lifted on transporting or relocating rabbits, a process that now requires a permit.
- We are strongly recommending the province allows a trap-neuter-release program allowing the rabbits to be relocated to a fenced, natural environment allowing them relative protection and food sources.
- We are hoping to see the province provide crown land for a 15 to 20 year containment project.
- We'd like to see the Ministry of Agricultural support programs to help combat the feral rabbits as conduits to viruses affecting farm animals and as a growing threat to food sources as they invade backyard gardens and farms.
- The Ministry of Transportation is also a stakeholder given the rabbits proximity along highways and near airports.
- The province is being asked to provide funding for research and assistance to municipalities.



RICHMOND news

News

Rabbits wrapped in red tape

Delay has multiplied problem of remaining feral population at auto mall

THE VANCOUVER SUN

BC rules out more sanctuaries for feral rabbits

THE VANCOUVER SUN

Richmond rabbit rescue runs
ground on shoal of red tape

The Province

Fur flies over B.C. rabbit rules

Advocates pushing for updated regulations concerning feral bunnies



Global NEWS



August 3, 2013 12:47 pm
**Richmond Auto Mall rabbits at risk
because of government red tape**
By Christine Tam Global News

The Role of the Municipalities



- The Union of BC Municipalities in 2012 asked the provincial government to regulate the sale of unsterilized rabbits, province wide.
- The province (FLNRORD) pointed out that under their regulations, as an 'alien invasive species' the municipalities were free to control and eradicate the rabbits, and the municipalities were also free to dictate sterilization and sales, in effect punting the rabbits back to the control of the municipalities.
- However, cities like Richmond cite the wildlife designation as a reason to not control the rabbits.

Year	Number	Resolution Title
2012	B123	Regulating the Sale of Unsterilized Rabbits
Resolution Text		
WHEREAS many municipalities are facing the problem of rabbit abandonment and proliferation in city parks and public areas; AND WHEREAS feral rabbits can cause significant property damage, and pose a hazard to public health and safety: THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the provincial government be requested to implement legislation to regulate the sale of unsterilized rabbits.		
Provincial Response		
Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development Under the Community Charter s. 8(3)(k), municipalities have the authority to adopt bylaws to regulate, prohibit and impose requirements in relation to animals, subject to any provincial regulations. B.C. Regulation 144/2004 "Community Charter Spheres of Concurrent Jurisdiction - Environment and Wildlife Regulation" identifies rabbits as "alien invasive species". Therefore, municipalities are authorized to control and eradicate those alien invasive species, except in cases where the species is part of a farm operation as defined under the Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act. Additionally, Community Charter s. 8(6) authorizes municipalities to regulate in relation to businesses. In relation to a bylaw banning the sale of puppies and dogs from pet stores, the British Columbia Supreme Court in <i>International Bio Research v. Richmond (City)</i> , 2011 BCSC 471 found that this authority could be used to prohibit such sales provided there is a valid municipal purpose for doing so and the bylaw is not unreasonable or otherwise impermissibly discriminatory. Given the potential scope of municipal regulatory authority, the Provincial Government does not intend to pursue legislation to regulate the sale of unsterilized rabbits at this time.		

A photograph of a miniature village scene. In the foreground, there are several small, colorful houses with white roofs and windows. A wooden pergola structure with yellow pillars and a corrugated metal roof is visible on the left. A large, leafy tree stands in the center. To the right, there is a small red house and a green house. The scene is set outdoors, with a paved area in the foreground and a fence in the background.

SOLUTIONS

Lethal or Non-Lethal Solutions?



- Not everyone wants to save the feral rabbits, many people would prefer to see them killed, and for good reason.
- Property owners are livid about the damage and the mess.
- Taxpayers must not be too happy about the rabbits damaging city property.
- The rabbits can and will form a conduit for the virus that will greatly affect rabbit farms and hobby breeders.
- The rabbits stick close to urban areas, they can't be shot.
- Poison will affect a large number of other species and taint the environment.
- Hired trappers and pest control companies have historically cost well over \$60,000 a year alone for just a few hundred rabbits.
- Humane euthanization adhering to SPCA standards is another substantial per rabbit cost.
- Even a lethal cull will cost money.
- There is no downside diverting those funds to a responsible rescue who can sterilize and contain the rabbits.



Municipal Control

- Municipal shelters are still the key entities in rabbit control with the ability (and mandate) to take surrendered rabbits and prevent them from being abandoned.
- Animal Control is not designed to hold animals long term, however, they are designed to adopt out (or euthanize) the animals in their care so they in turn must make other arrangements for the surrendered rabbits.
- Rabbit adoptions are slow when agencies traditionally try to find indoor homes for individual rabbits, thus non-traditional methods and destinations need to be explored.
- It is not feasible or fair to ask the problem municipalities to take on the sole burden of rabbits already in the environment but they should partner with other entities.

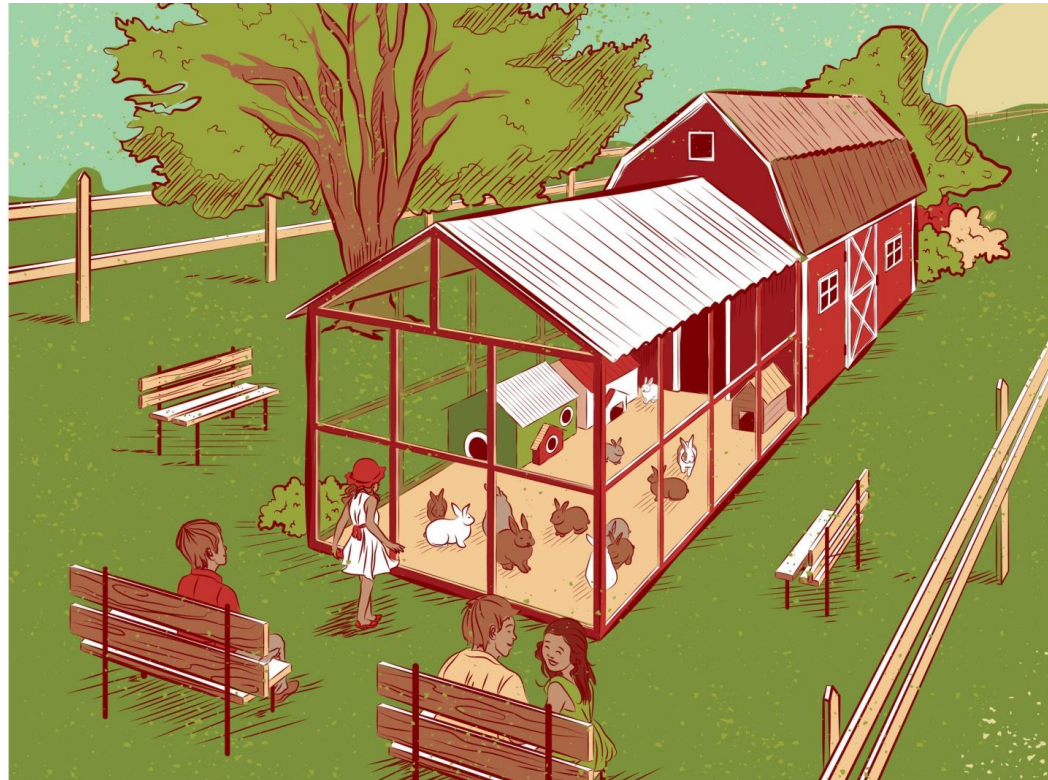
Non-Traditional Adoptions and Relocation

- Most municipal shelters and almost all rescue groups attempt to adopt out single and paired rabbits to indoor homes, another effect of the House Rabbit Society's strong presence.
- While rabbits shouldn't be housed in backyard hutches, they can (and many should) be adopted to safe outdoor homes with the right criteria.
- Chicken coops, barn stalls, indoor/outdoor shed set-ups and other methods should be normalized.
- Rabbits can also be adopted out in colonies, allowing many more to be re-homed in a happier and healthier natural environment.
- Businesses, markets, developers, institutions and community projects can also house rabbits under the right circumstances, eg: rooftop gardens, community centres, schools, city parks and others positioned to take small colonies of contained rabbits.



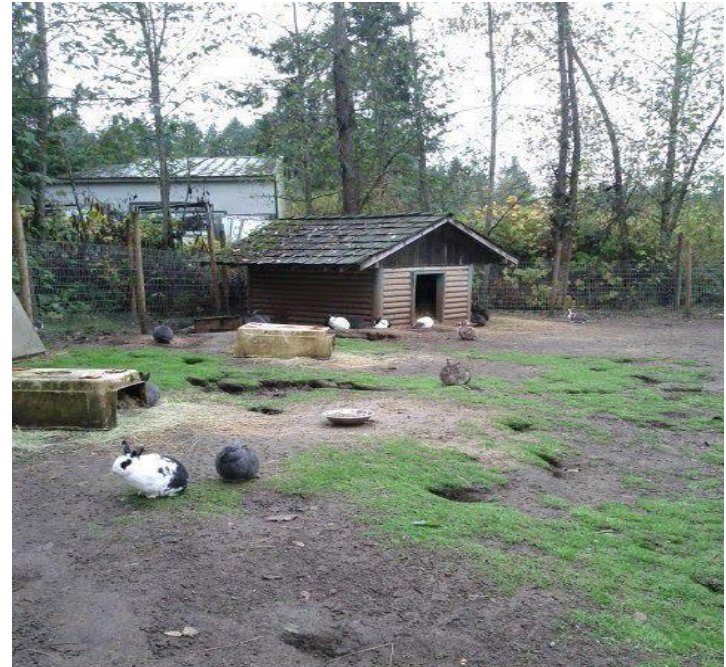
Rabbits: An Attraction, Not A Pest!

- Events, markets and various businesses pay to rent 'petting zoos.' Rabbitats has developed humane 'no touch' stress-free methods of viewing and interaction.
- Parks containing animals are major family attractions.
- 'Therapy animals' are a fast growing trend.
- The rabbits can be a bonus for businesses looking to attract a customers, including farm markets, garden centres and developments. Institutions, care homes and other venues can have controlled colonies.
- City Parks can position the rabbits as a 'hands off' calming attraction overseen by Rabbitats volunteers.
- Developers can also incorporate low-maintenance 'Rabbitats' onto 'Green roofs', garden courtyards and other innovative projects giving them an added feature – and a lot of extra attention.



Sanctuary Rescue

- Rabbits are most affordably and easily housed in sanctuary settings where they can be sterilized and allowed to live out their lives in large groups.
- Adoptions attempts can be labour intensive, time consuming and most often fruitless, and many rabbits don't like humans.
- Surprisingly few sanctuaries exist, even farm sanctuaries taking rabbits are rare, largely from a lack of knowledge and education.
- Farm rabbits have been traditionally been unsterilized and housed in cage systems and pet rabbits in hutches, re-education promoting coops, stalls and well-fenced pastures is needed.
- An unknown number of larger rabbit-specific destinations stay under the radar to avoid red tape.



Partnerships

- Partnerships with various levels of government, businesses, environmental agencies, rescues and other sources are necessary.
- The rabbit issue falls under a myriad of categories with potential funding from environmental and stewardship programs, wildlife, agricultural, animal rescue and more.
- Businesses, property owners and stratas are willing to fund the rabbit removal from private properties.
- Invasive Species Councils and other environmental and stewardship groups recognize the need for control.
- The rabbits, an alien invasive species, are a provincial, municipal and even federal concern.
- Municipal budgets spent on fixing rabbit damage can be diverted to rabbit control.
- Once the rabbits are removed from the environment and contained, the majority of the support must come from the rabbits' fans and not their foes.



Animal Bylaws

- The City of Richmond may be dropping the ball on the bunnies, but Richmond has very progressive bylaws addressing identification and sterilization of cats, points that will also work well for rabbits.
- Kelowna and Delta are examples of municipalities who have successfully controlled their rabbits through financially supporting rescue efforts AND changing their bylaws to provide stronger controls on rabbits.
- Communities like Saanich also have progressive rabbit bylaws.
- We are also asking municipalities to increase the number of rabbits allowed on private properties to encourage people to house more rabbits in secure enclosures.

On

2.2.1.1 Every owner of a cat must:

- (a) ensure that such cat bears sufficient identification to enable any person finding the cat to contact the owner;
- (b) where such cat is actually or apparently over six months of age, ensure that such cat has been spayed or neutered, as applicable, by a veterinarian, unless the owner holds a valid cat breeding permit for the cat; and
- (c) ensure that where such cat is not spayed or neutered, such cat is not permitted to be running at large.

2.2.1.2 The identification required under clause (a) of subsection 2.2.1.1 may take the form of, but is not limited to, a collar and tag, tattoo, or microchip implant.

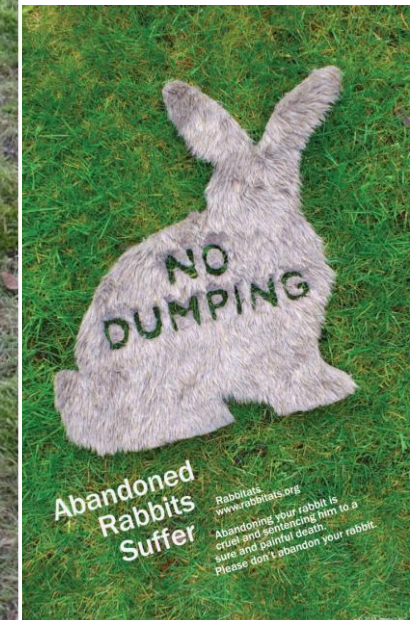
Cat Breeding Permits

2.2.1.1 Every owner of an un-spayed cat who offers to sell, give away, or otherwise transfer ownership or dispose of the offspring of such cat must:

- (a) obtain a cat breeding permit in accordance with the provisions of subsection 2.2.2.2; and
- (b) include the number of such cat breeding permit in any advertisement regarding the offspring.

Preventative Measures

Rabbit rescues stand a better chance than governments of preventing abandonment and burgeoning colonies by peer education. They can convince people to adhere to bylaws about turning rabbits loose and feeding the feral populations. Supporting rescues can be best prevention method.



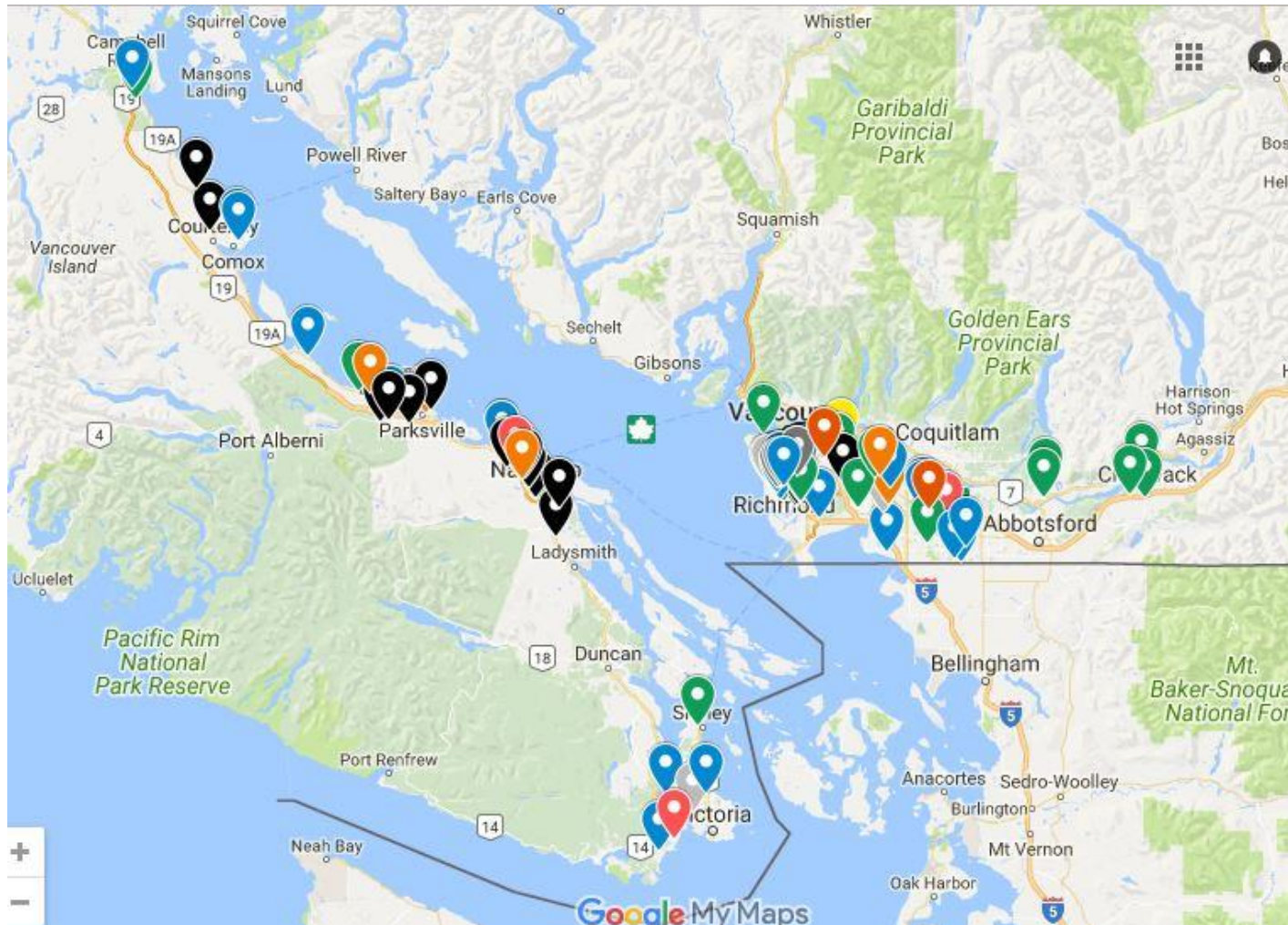
LOGISTICS



Rabbit Tracking Map

www.rabbitats.org/abandoned-rabbits

Rabbitats has developed a map that flags abandoned rabbits, feral colonies and RHD virus deaths. A form on our website is provided for people to report all sightings. *(This will soon be hosted at our new site, www.abandonedrabbits.com).*



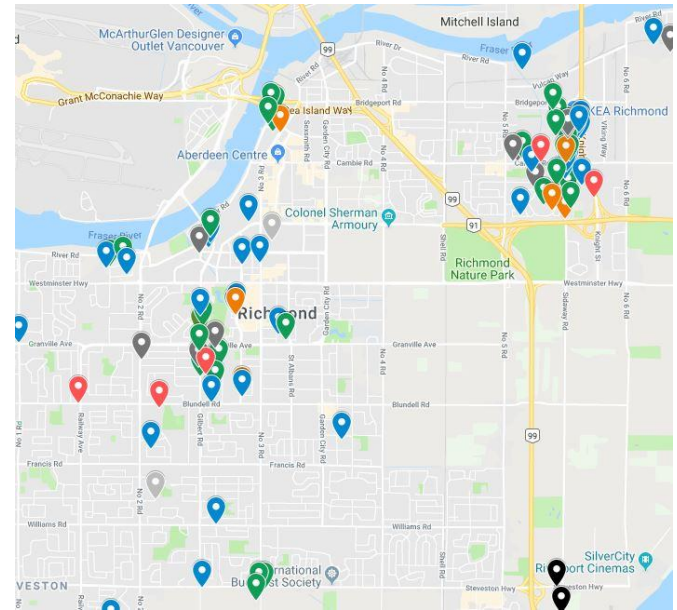
Richmond Rabbit Numbers

The mapping project is still in development but an estimated 2000 domestic rabbits are loose in Richmond.

While many areas so far just have random rabbits and small colonies, several have substantial populations, including hundreds in an area stretching from the Hwy 91 overpass north of the Richmond Auto Mall all the way to Ikea, substantial populations in the Dover Park area, and a long standing population in the Minoru Park area.

A five-year trapping program with a 10-year post-relocation containment period is required. The rabbits tend to come out in the evenings causing their numbers and locations to be underestimated.

A previous formula estimating 10 rabbits in hiding for every one spotted proved to be incorrect, less than twice as many appears to be more accurate.



Rabbit Logistics

- Feral rabbit control cannot be random, each area needs to be cleared methodically and completely, Rabbits' will not trap part of a colony or a in an area where other colonies are close by.
- Trapping should take place from November to early January when their numbers drop and they will come into the traps for food.
- Trapping is almost impossible in the spring and early summer as the bait is no match for sweet spring grass.
- Trapping is accomplished via a mix of hav-a-hart animal traps, purpose-built enclosures and nets.
- The rabbits need to be placed in an indoor holding area for assessment and sterilization recovery.
- Abandoned house pets will continue to be housed indoors while the ferals and sturdier unadoptable pets are housed in outdoor enclosures or barns.
- A 10x12 horse stall can comfortably hold 30 rabbits.



RHDV-2

- The feral rabbit populations have been the conduit for the deadly Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus outbreak (RHDV2).
- The virus, which only affects European rabbits, appeared mid-Vancouver Island and Annacis Island simultaneously in mid-February, killing all the feral rabbits in those areas and eventually affecting at least five Island rabbitries, killing all their commercial meat and show rabbits.
- It killed two large colonies in Richmond, including dozens of loose rabbits at Richmond Country Farms.
- It spread to the City's animal shelter via feral rabbits on the property (not picked up by animal control), infecting and killing several rabbits and resulting in the euthanization of 64 others.
- No new infections have been reported since early May.
- It did NOT control the rabbits – they are rapidly repopulating the affected areas.
- The virus is expected to return and again spread via the feral colonies (while failing to control them) again jeopardizing pets, show and farm rabbits.
- Environment, Wildlife and Agriculture ministries have a vested interest in controlling this virus.

Attn: Richmond Residents!

WARNING!

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus is a Silent Killer

Rabbits may be dying in Richmond. Large colonies of loose rabbits can simply disappear with no bodies in sight. A group of 50 may turn into two survivors almost overnight. This virus can affect house bunnies and farm rabbits, it must be tracked. Keep your distance but watch for unusual deaths and substantial drops in numbers and please report them immediately to Richmond Animal Control and list them on www.rabbitats.org/abandoned-rabbits

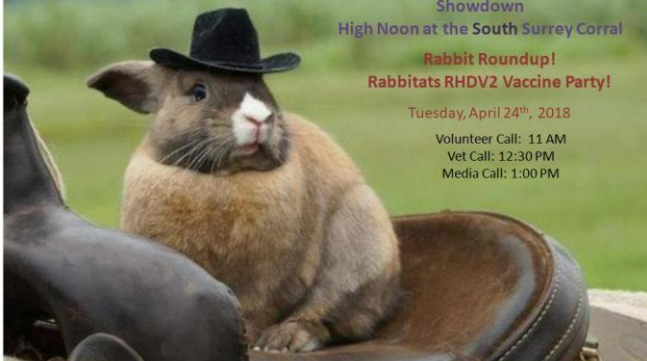
Shoot 'Em Up Cowbun!

Showdown
High Noon at the South Surrey Corral

Rabbit Roundup!
Rabbitats RHDV2 Vaccine Party!

Tuesday, April 24th, 2018

Volunteer Call: 11 AM
Vet Call: 12:30 PM
Media Call: 1:00 PM



COSTS & SUSTAINABILITY



RABBITATS: BUDGET PROJECTIONS (per enclosure)

MATERIALS/SUPPLIES	HOUSE/GARAGE	UNDER DECK	ENCLOSURE 1	ENCLOSURE 2	ENCLOSURE 3	ENCLOSURE 4
	Aug	Sept/Oct	Nov - Dec	Jan - March	April - June	July - Sept
POWER TOOLS						
nail gun - power	donated					
nail gun - battery	donated		300.00			
drill						
Bobcat/Excavator Rental	donated	donated	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00
mitre Saw	donated					
drill saw		100.00				
table saw	donated					
GARDEN TOOLS						
hedge, shovel, rakes	donated	100.00				
wrench set		50.00				
lawnmower		100.00				
discs			50.00			
wheel barrow	found	80.00				
LUMBER						
2x4's	on hand			200.00	200.00	200.00
2x6's	on hand			200.00	200.00	200.00
2x8's	on hand			200.00	200.00	200.00
plywood	on hand	donated	donated	donated	donated	donated
plywood	on hand	on hand	300.00	300.00	300.00	300.00
SUPPLIES						
screen		70.00	70.00	70.00	70.00	70.00
nails	donated					
misc	250.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00
MATERIALS						
flooring	800.00					
netting			300.00	300.00	300.00	300.00
roadbase		300.00	1500.00	1500.00	1500.00	1500.00
landscaping			500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00
ground wire	250.00		600.00	600.00	600.00	600.00
additional fence wire	donated		400.00	100.00	800.00	1000.00
OTHER						
canvas shed tent	350.00		1000.00			
sheds/fence			1000.00	100.00	1000.00	1000.00
dog house	donated	donated				
guy	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00
unlabeled materials	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00
electric fencing/cameras		450.00	100.00	450.00		550.00
PHASE COSTS	1050.00	850.00	7520.00	722.00	6570.00	7620.00
SUBTOTAL PROJECT:	3540.00					
RABBIT EXPENSES						
	25 rabbits	50/75 rabbits	100/175 rabbits	100/175 rabbits	100/175 rabbits	475 rabbits
VET BILLS						
spay/neuter (one time cost)	2000.00	8000.00	8000.00	800.00	8000.00	8000.00
ack to owner	105.00	630.00	1470.00	345.00	4725.00	5962.50
FOOD						
hay	62.50	800.00	900.00	105.00	2812.50	3562.50
pellets	15.00	80.00	150.00	300.00	450.00	600.00
vegg tablets	26.67	80.00	280.00	400.00	600.00	700.00
HEADQUARTERS						
rent	3450.00	8500.00	8500.00	690.00	6900.00	6900.00
utilities		100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
cell phone	200.00	700.00	1000.00	100.00	1500.00	1400.00
insurance					2500.00	
RABBIT COSTS	5829.17	10550.00	10200.00	226.50	27587.50	27307.50
TOTAL RABBIT COSTS	11045.17					
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS:	14585.17					
MONTHLY CARE COSTS	3754.17	2960.00	2515.00	273.00	4120.83	4440.83

Rescue Cost Examples

- The rescue and relocation of 500 rabbits requires \$37,500 in spay/neuter fees.
- Vaccinations can run as high as \$5000 (or as low as \$1500)
- Our current sanctuary under construction, designed to hold 500 rabbits, will cost \$31,500 to build.
- The total project costs will be \$142,000
- The monthly overhead and care costs at that location for 500 rabbits will be roughly \$4500 p/m, or \$54,000 per year, including rent and overhead.
- Rabbitats expects the entities benefiting from rabbit removal and surrenders to at least cover the spay/neuter costs.
- Donors have traditionally covered the veterinary costs not associated with sterilization.

Damage Costs

- Rabbits cause considerable damage to the environment, destroying landscaping, food sources, structures, etc.
- The corporation of Delta assessed their damage at over \$300,000, they spent a fraction of that on a sterilization and relocation program.
- The Richmond Auto Mall determined that their landscaping losses were in excess of \$60,000 and redirected those funds to humane rescue -- which also generated priceless positive media coverage.
- Rabbits invading farmer Bill Zylmans fields in 2006 reportedly caused damages in excess of \$30,000 in just three weeks.
- Residents in many areas of Richmond cannot grow gardens; public areas, including playgrounds, are littered with their feces.
- Presumably Richmond city crews regularly fixing rabbit damage, eg: replacing plants, protecting trees, fixing turf and filling rabbit holes (the latter generating major negative media coverage).



Costs and Care

- The highest rescue costs are sterilization fees averaging around \$75 per rabbit, and treating ailing rabbits.
- There is now an additional \$10 per rabbit annual cost for the RHD vaccine.
- Rabbits are relatively cheap and easy to feed, however.
- Daily produce (pre-compost) is readily donated by produce stores and markets.
- Their main diet is hay.
- They are fed a limited amount of rabbit pellets.
- Edible tree branches augment their diet.
- In the summer the rabbits can eat pulled tall grass from nearby fields.
- Construction costs have so far been minimal as much of the supplies needed to build enclosures are scrounged or donated used.
- Care is relatively easy, our 125 sanctuary rabbits takes less than an hour a day; one person easily cared for over 600 UVic rabbits.
- NOTE: Rabbitats strives to adopt out small colonies of rabbits, we remain responsible thus if the placements don't work out, the rabbits can return to the rescue.



Sustainability and Risk Management

- Cleared areas are easily monitored for newly abandoned rabbits and can be kept rabbit-free (as long as they're not coming from adjacent properties).
- Once the rabbits are removed from the environment , sterilized and contained, the majority of the support will come from rabbits fans.
- A natural diet will keep costs down..
- There are currently many available destinations requiring minimal construction and maintenance costs.
- The rabbits do need a stable, funded central agency/organization to monitor all relocations and take the rabbits back if necessary.
- In the case of the rescue or sanctuary shutting down, the sterilized rabbits can be released into a controlled, natural area with some minimal predator protection and natural food sources with no need for human intervention.



A small, fluffy brown rabbit is sitting in a wire cage. The rabbit has large, upright ears and is looking directly at the camera. To the left of the rabbit, there is a piece of red and yellow fruit, likely an apple. The cage floor is dark and has some small pieces of food scattered on it. The background is a white wire mesh.

CASE STUDIES & EXAMPLES

Success Story: Kelowna

- The City of Kelowna was overrun with feral rabbits and in 2008 the City called an exterminator in spite of protests from the local community.
- The exterminator's cost was \$52,000.
- The protests greatly escalated when the exterminator was caught stomping a rabbit causing the City to redirect to a local rescue group.
- Roughly 800 rabbits were eventually caught and housed in a number of enclosures hosted throughout the area.
- The city passed a bylaw requiring all rabbits for sale or adoption to be sterilized
- After three years Kelowna was virtually rabbit-free
- The rabbits remain under control.



Success Story: UVIC

- Two thousand rabbits were estimated to be inhabiting the University of Victoria campus at it's peak.
- UVic initially paid \$20,000 for a failed rescue/research program, then ordered a lethal cull. After the first 100 rabbits were killed, protests, injunctions and provincial regulations delayed the project allowing rescuers to find sanctuary space and raise \$125,000 (including a \$50,000 grant for spays and neuters from Fur-Bearer Defenders)
- The final tally was 1000 rabbits -- the surviving 903 were all successfully re-homed.
- The majority of rabbits went to a sanctuary in Coombs, BC, on a property that had previously occupied by a petting zoo.
- Only additional fencing was required, and over 600 rabbits were cared for by one woman with limited assistance.
- The project was funded for life (in advance) via donations, grants and investments.

Con't ...



UVic con't

- 225 spayed and neutered rabbits were taken to an existing sanctuary in Texas and housed in a barn and purpose-built pens.
- 50 more UVic rabbits went to a family farm in Cowichan Station with a couple with small children and full time jobs who easily took the rabbits housed in a converted pig barn and run, no additional support was required.
- 50 joined a feral colony at a rescue in Washington State, no additional support was required.
- An additional 50 went to another WA sanctuary along with a one-time \$5000 donation.
- At least 300 hundred of the surviving rabbits rescued from UVic and Canmore have since been relocated to a doctor's hobby farm in Alberta.
- Several entities wanting UVic rabbits didn't get any either because of the arduous government process involved in getting a permit, or there were no more rabbits available.



Success Story: Delta

- Delta successfully trapped and sterilized hundreds of rabbits and released them into a naturally contained park.
- The province was concerned the rabbits would damage the park's eco-system, more research is needed but that appears not to have happened.
- A budget of \$60,000 came in much lower thanks to volunteer labour and veterinarians discounting their services.
- The municipality noted that cost of the rabbit management program was also far less than the annual costs of repairing the damage caused by the rabbits in the civic precinct.
- Prior to the round-up, Delta had incurred approximately \$350,000 in costs to repair damages caused by the rabbits to the buildings and grounds in the civic precinct.
- Similarly, in 2011, the Delta Hospice spent approximately \$70,000 to repair landscape damage caused by rabbits.
- A spay/neuter law and diligent animal control have kept the rabbits in check.



Example: SALI's Farm

- The Semiahmoo Animal Rescue League (SALI) provides animal therapy for at-risk children using rescued at-risk animals.
- SALI and Rabbitats teamed up to build an indoor/outdoor 'rabbitat' housing adopted rabbits who provide endless joy and healing to the kids.



Success Story: Richmond Auto Mall

- Rabbitats was looking for an inaugural rescue project at the same time the Richmond Auto Mall was looking for a solution to their rabbit infestation problem.
- Rabbitats approached the Richmond Auto Mall Association, a body representing the 14 dealerships on site, with our plan and a proposed budget covering five years of ongoing support to be split amongst the businesses, public donations and event fundraising.
- A holding space in an empty dealership was used to house the rabbits.
- Permanent space was initially found at a farm in Delta, but a better option surfaced in South Surrey.
- A sanctuary to house 120 of the initial 250 rabbits was built at that location while the remaining rabbits were adopted out in smaller groups.
- A semi-permanent garage was eventually offered to the rescue as a shelter and we rounded up stragglers and began accepting rabbits from other areas.
- Fifty adoptable rabbits remain with the rescue and another forty ferals are housed at a horse farm in Delta.



South Surrey Sanctuary

- Rabbitats South Surrey sanctuary houses 100 to 125 Richmond Auto Mall rabbits.
- It was built for less than \$5000 (including a 20-ft shed) in a rescue partner's courtyard with additional space in their barn using wood, wire, road base, netting, and later acrylic roofing panels.
- A volunteer built custom bunny houses and feeders.
- The sanctuary is secure from human and animal predators.
- The set-ups ensures easy maintenance.
- A volunteer spends just 60 minutes a day on rabbit care with extra cleaning sessions on weekends.
- The rabbits eat roughly 12 bales of hay and 40 lbs of pellets a month, and donated produce cast-offs, grass, tree branches, etc. daily.



Fail: Canmore, Alberta

- In 2011, the town of Canmore became concerned their burgeoning feral rabbit population was attracting predators and causing wildlife conflicts.
- Their solution was to budget roughly \$50,000 per year tendered to a trapper.
- The town invited a rescue (only one met the town's criteria) to take rabbits **but not share the budget.**
- The first four months, the trapper received \$29,680 and the rescue received 189 rabbits, which then needed to be sterilized and cared for out of the rescue's pocket.
- Eventually the rescue's funding and patience ran out -- rabbit fans were at odds with the town and the rescue and rescues were at war with each other -- and subsequent rabbits were gassed by the trapper and the bodies sent to a wildlife centre.
- While the numbers were reduced, many rabbits remain.
- The trapping was woefully incomplete – **residents not in favour of the lethal cull denied permission to trap on their property**, and the rabbits continued to multiply.
- The total bill has so far surpassed \$350,000 with the a \$50,000 annual contract again up for grabs.
- The goal is now to reduce, but not eliminate, the population.
- <https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/canmore-resumes-rabbit-cull-1.1041733>



Abandoned domestic rabbits and their feral offspring



Love them or hate them, they don't belong out there