

Malleefowl Preservation – A Farmer Initiative

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Mantung-Maggea Land Management Group

For over a decade scrub clearance controls have applied in South Australia and conservation minded farmers have been able to take out Heritage Agreements on remnant scrub to conserve native flora and fauna for all time.

A group of farmers on adjoining holdings in the Mantung area of the Northern Murray Mallee decided to co-ordinate their efforts to save the malleefowl. Survival of the birds was threatened by loss of habitat and predation by foxes. A "Land Management Group" was set-up to co-ordinate rabbit and fox control. The Natural Resources Management Strategy of the Murray Darling Basin Commission has funded the project for its initial four years. Funding has covered most expenses relating to rabbit and fox control, other than farmers time and vehicle running costs, and has included purchase of baitlayers and fumigators. The most recent expenditure was the purchase of traps for feral cats.

The management activities include:

Rabbit Control

A baiting programme is undertaken at the end of summer. A high success rate is attributed to all farmers baiting at the same time. On completion of the baiting a contractor is employed to rip warrens in the scrub. Fumigation follows if warrens are re-opened.

Fox Control

Baiting programmes last about six weeks and are held in Spring and Autumn. The baits are placed in small mounds of sand. They are checked weekly and replaced if necessary. Each bait station is numbered and activity at each station is recorded.

Feral Cats

Last year we became aware of the presence of feral cats in the area and purchased cage traps. To date about 10 cats have been caught.

The ten farmers involved in the Mantung Land Management Group are determined to continue the project for as long as malleefowl survive in the area.