

MEDIA RELEASE

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Major national pest animal R&D initiative through to final assessment stage

Australia's largest integrated pest animal R&D initiative, the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre, is a step closer in its aim to be renewed so that it can produce more breakthrough pest animal control technologies. This work is critical in tackling a problem that is costing agriculture and regional Australia \$1 billion a year, and impacts hundreds of nationally listed threatened species.

The Invasive Animals CRC is seeking a five-year extension from the Australian Government once its current funding runs out in June 2012. It was advised today that it has made it through to the final stage of Round 14 of the Federal Science Department's CRC Program process. Key outputs from the extension will include:

- **Australia's first carp biocontrol agent ready for approval.** Overseas experience shows that carp populations can be reduced by more than 80% which will greatly improve the health of the Murray-Darling and its important wetlands
- **Building a strategic rabbit biocontrol platform** based on new technologies that ensures Australia gets maximum impact from Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD). The platform will result in national benefits of more than \$1 billion over 15 years and help the recovery of many of the 156 nationally threatened species impacted by rabbits
- **A new humane rat and mouse toxin and mouse outbreak response system** to efficiently reduce mouse plague impacts for grain producers.

The proposed extension builds on an impressive track record that includes:

- **Rabbits:** Discovering the native benign virus (RCV-A1) that was partially protecting rabbits in wetter, cooler regions from RHD. Then using this knowledge in our *RHD Boost* project to see if new overseas RHD strains can overcome the RCV-A1 virus leading to increased effectiveness against rabbits in these areas. The proposed release of any new *RHD Boost* strains that have been shown to be safe and effective will be done using a new freeze-dried delivery system to reduce transport costs.
- **Wild dogs and foxes:** Developing a next generation bait that includes an antidote for working and pet dogs and new delivery systems such as mechanical ejectors and lethal trap devices that give land managers more control options. This has been combined with work to validate and then promote the effectiveness of regional wild dog control approaches based on a cooperative approach between farmers and public land managers.
- **Feral pigs:** Developing the world's first manufactured feral pig bait and a next generation bait with an antidote for working and pet dogs.

The Invasive Animals CRC extension is a focussed collaboration of 26 partners that have already committed more than \$52 million or almost three quarters of the \$72 million over five years needed to continue the R&D program that will deliver the new technologies critical to tackle this pressing agricultural and environmental problem.

MORE INFORMATION:

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