

RABBIT POPULATION CONTROL PROGRAMME – PROGRESS UPDATE

23 September 2025

Since November 2024, concerns about a steadily increasing rabbit population led to discussions within the Environmental Committee and were formally raised at the AGM after a member proposed potential solutions. Over the months that followed, a lengthy process of research, networking with external specialists and service providers, surveys, and a detailed legal review was undertaken. This work culminated in a Rabbit Assessment and Action Plan, discussed by the Environmental Committee and submitted to the Board.

The result was the Rabbit Population Control Programme (RPCP), formally adopted by the MMHOA Board on 29 May 2025. The RPCP sets a clear goal: to achieve a 60% reduction in rabbit numbers using a combination of humane capture, relocation where possible, sterilisation of breeding females, and veterinary euthanasia where necessary.

Progress Jul - Sep 2025

- 20 rabbits safely captured and relocated to a registered farm.
 - Inclusive of a breeding pair.
- 7 rabbits taken by natural predators.
- 1 rabbit removed as road kill.
- ~15 juveniles recorded in Aruba Close; 7 of these were predated.
- 1 breeding female at Arthur Fennel Park successfully sterilised, having 2 females sterilised during 2025.
- **Total removals/preyed to date: 35 rabbits.**

No	Area description	size		number	comments	number	comments	number	comments	number	comments
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				May-25		Jul-25		Sept-25		Oct-25	
1	Jamaican Palms	4832,95	0,483295	2		1	preyed 1	1	occasionally	1	occasionally
2	Martinique Cove	31204,03	3,120403	6	breeding	2	removed 4	2		2	
3	Palm drive and gym	32399,64	3,239964	6	average/day	4	removed 2	4		4	
4	Anquilla Close	1224,18	0,122418	2	every day	2		2		2	
5	Aruba Close	3973,98	0,397398	16	breeding deck 1141	6	removed10	10	removed 4 after 1 pair had 8 babies preyed 2;	12	New wild pair move in; expected in new breeding cycle. Decks hopefully to be closed off thereafter
6	Bahama Close	4254,96	0,425496	6	daily	3	removed/prey	2	preyed 1	2	
7	Montego Bay	11140,51	1,114051	4	daily	4		4	babies preyed on by cat	6	expected in new breeding cycle
9	AFP grassland	6481,32	0,648132	8	daily	4	2 females sterilised		2 females sterilised		2 females sterilised
8	Cormorant strip	3917,17	0,391717	4	daily	4	same rabbits in area	2	same rabbits in area	2	same rabbits in area
10	Tobago close	39306,3	3,93063								
11	Bonaire Close & 926	38429,07	3,842907	4	breeding 924 & 925	2	prey	3		10	expected in new breeding cycle
12	Kingston Place	10462,32	1,046232	6		5	prey	5		5	
		187626,43	18,762643	64		37		35		46	
	Average per hectare			3,4		2		1,9		2,5	
	Average preyed or removed					42,2%		45,3%		28,1%	

Impact so far

This equates to an estimated **45% reduction of the initial rabbit population**, moving us close to the plan's target of 60% by year-end.

Expected breeding efforts will result in a population increase during October. These newcomers will need some intervention as success rate regarding the target is implicated.

Challenges Observed

- **High reproduction rate:** Despite removals, the population increases naturally by between 15 and 20% per month ($\pm 17\%$ in Aruba Close only), demanding continuous intervention.
- **Vacuum effect:** Removal of a breeding pair in certain areas (e.g. Aruba Close) allowed wild outsider pairs to move in, complicating capture.
- **Feeding by residents:** Especially noted in Kingston Place and Erven 924–927, where feeding continues to drive population growth and also attracts **secondary pests** such as rats and bush pigs.

Next Actions (Oct 2025)

- Intensify **sterilisation programme** for breeding females (costly but essential for long-term control).
- Support the informal **deck closure initiative** in Aruba Close to block prime breeding spaces.
- Expand capture and monitoring focus to **Kingston Place & Erf 926**, identified as hotspots in the RPCP.
- Strengthen **resident awareness drive** to halt feeding practices that undermine control efforts.

Resident Reminders

- **Do not feed rabbits** – feeding encourages uncontrolled breeding and contravenes Kouga municipal by-laws.
- **Report sightings** of new burrows or feeding points directly to the Environmental Officer.
- **Remove food** left at feeding spots as soon as possible.
- **Support cooperative actions** (such as closing off under-deck access) to make breeding areas less accessible.

While good progress (nearly halfway to the RPCP target) has been made, the success of the programme depends heavily on resident cooperation with the feeding ban and support for control measures.