

Farmanco Mouse Surveillance Project

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Key Messages

- No mouse activity was detected across all surveillance rounds in the Geraldton area during 2024.
- Chew cards placed from Miling to Bunjil have remained untouched, reflecting a continued trend of no mouse sightings since 2023.
- Ongoing monitoring will continue to ensure early detection for optimal crop protection.

Aim

The Farmanco Mouse Surveillance project, funded by the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC), is focused on monitoring mouse activity across Australia. The project aims to equip growers with the knowledge necessary to manage any rise in mouse populations, including potential plagues. The project works to improve understanding of mouse behaviour and optimise baiting strategies for effective management.

The project monitors key sites between Miling and Bunjil using chew cards and burrow activity to track mouse populations. This approach provides valuable data for growers, allowing timely decision-making regarding mouse management and crop protection.

Background

Mouse populations can surge rapidly, causing significant crop damage if not controlled early. The plagues in Eastern Australia during 2020–2021 were a clear example, with thousands of mice per hectare devastating farmland. These events highlighted the importance of early detection and proactive management.

The Farmanco Mice Surveillance project, operating nationwide, is designed to assist farmers to be prepared for the next outbreak. In the Geraldton/ Kwinana area, the Liebe Group has been monitoring key sites from Miling to Bunjil. By regularly using chew cards and checking for burrow activity, the project ensures growers receive early warnings, allowing them to take action before mouse populations become a threat.

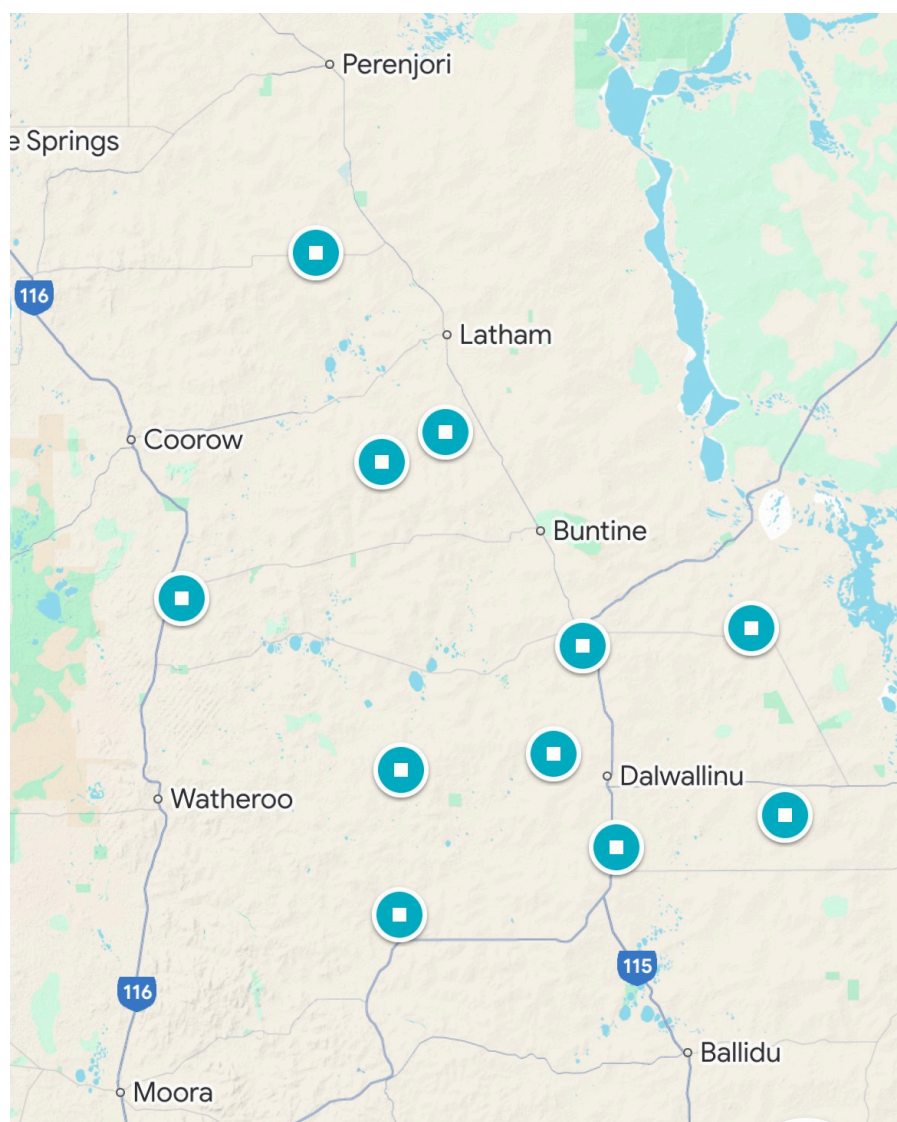


Figure 1. Map of sites surveilled.

Results

Throughout 2024, surveillance in the Geraldton/ Kwinana area, from Miling to Bunjil, consistently showed no signs of mouse activity. Chew cards placed in canola, wheat, and barley crops remained untouched, and no active burrows were detected. One hundred and ten chew cards were deployed in each of the three rounds, with none showing signs of disturbance, indicating minimal mouse presence across the region.

This outcome was anticipated, as mouse activity has been consistently low across Western Australia, particularly in central and northern areas. Factors such as low harvest losses in 2023, which left minimal grain on the ground, and lower-than-average rainfall over summer created unfavourable conditions for mouse breeding. These conditions effectively prevented the pyramid effect, where mouse populations grow rapidly under favourable conditions.

Comments

The lack of mouse activity in the Geraldton/ Kwinana area is a positive outcome for growers, reducing the risk of crop damage during the critical pre-harvest period. However, continuous monitoring is essential to maintain control and prevent future infestations.

This result aligns with the broader trend of low mouse activity across the state. Despite the favourable conditions for crops this year, the absence of mouse sightings suggests that previous management strategies and conditions in 2023 and over the summer and into autumn of 2024 have effectively kept populations low. As stated by GRDC in their 2024 update, “mouse activity throughout the season was relatively minimal in comparison to the two previous years. With a relatively dry summer period and later break than the past two seasons, we can summarise that the conditions at the start of the year were less favourable for mice to breed and build up numbers early, given the absence of moisture and likely available feed in the fields” (GRDC, 2024, p. 24). Ongoing surveillance will remain critical to improving our understanding and managing mouse populations. Continued monitoring efforts will help detect early signs of activity and ensure that any necessary management actions can be taken promptly to protect crops.

Acknowledgments

This project is a Grains Research and Development Corporation investment led by Farmanco Management Consultants.

References

Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC). (2024). Mouse Surveillance 2024 Update. Grains Research & Development Corporation.

For further information, refer to Grains Research & Development Corporation Mouse Management at: <https://grdc.com.au/resources-and-publications/resources/mouse-management>

Peer Review

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