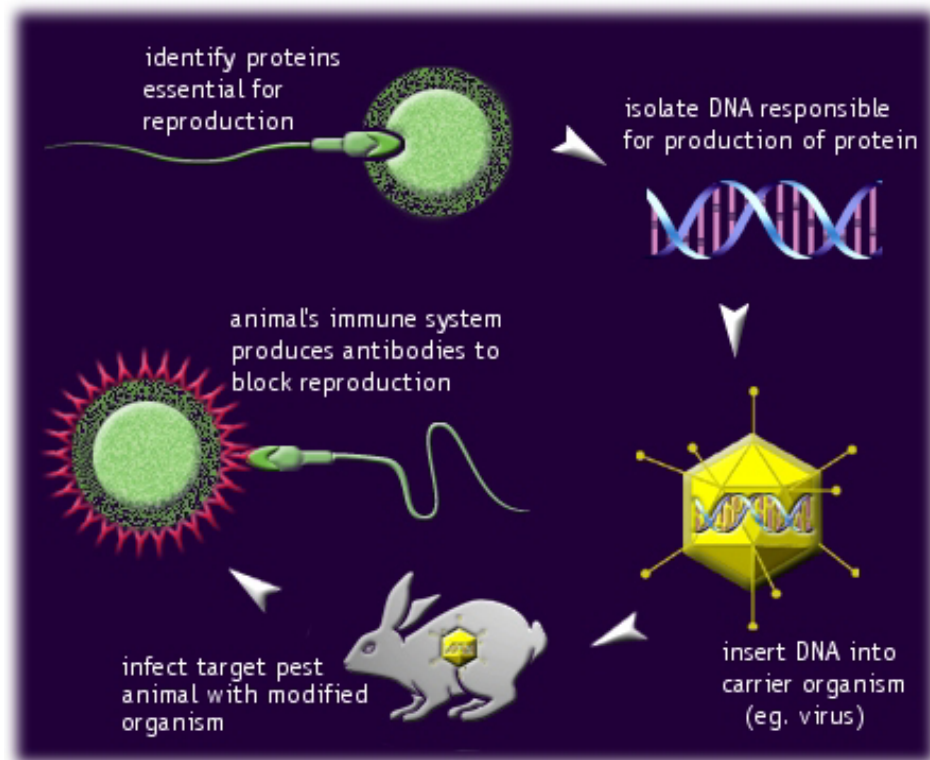


Immunocontraception: A potential solution



Immunocontraception in the rabbit

Australia urgently needs new methods to control introduced pest animals like the European rabbit, the European red fox and the introduced house mouse. The PAC CRC is developing vaccines to control pest animals by limiting their reproduction. Delivery of the vaccines will be through baits, or preferably through the agency of a virus which spreads naturally through the target pest population.

The vaccines will be created by genetically modifying a carrier organism (eg. a virus) to include sperm, egg or other key reproductive proteins (antigens). The product is a modified virus, which during infection of the pest, causes an immune response which attacks the animal's own sperm or eggs and prevents reproduction. The use of fertility control vaccines promises to be more cost-effective, more humane and more environmentally friendly than current methods of control.

Any new technology involves risks that need to be identified and assessed. All research carried out by the PAC CRC is being conducted in secure laboratory facilities and has been approved under the strict guidelines of the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR).

The CRC is aiming to produce vaccines that are highly specific for each pest animal targeted and the agents will only be released if safety can be assured. The CRC is participating in a number of risk assessment review processes to identify any risks associated with the technology and to take the steps to ensure they are addressed.

Finally, the release of any genetically modified organism into the environment is now subject to legislation which considers any economic, social and ethical concerns related to the technology. The Federal Government is establishing a new Office of the Gene Technology Regulator in 2001 and the CRC will have to comply with all regulations the Office prescribes.

Benefiting the environment
through pest animal control



Pest Animal Control CRC

GPO Box 284

Canberra ACT 2601 Australia

Phone: +61 2 6242 1768

Fax: +61 2 6242 1511

Email: office@pestanimal.crc.org.au

Web: www.pestanimal.crc.org.au