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## Breeding given go ahead for endangered wallaby

A new breeding permit means there could soon be a baby boom for the embattled Bridled Nailtail Wallaby.

With fewer than 500 of the wallabies known to be in existence, a captive breeding program is essential to ensuring the survival of the species.

A small group of volunteers caring for some wallabies in Marlborough have received the go ahead from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to start breeding, and they're wasting no time.

Tina Janssen of Project Kial, which receives funding from the Fitzroy Basin Association Inc (FBA), said they hoped to produce up to 40 wallabies by the end of next year.

"First we need the DNA results, to work out which animals can be bred together, and hopefully start breeding in early October," Ms Janssen said.

"Gestation takes about 26 days, and once the young are born we wait till they reach about 8 months old before weaning, micro-chipping them and removing them from mum.

"After that they spend a few months in a separate enclosure with very little human contact. This helps prepare them for being released into the wild."

Ms Janssen said the Bridled Nailtail Wallaby was easy to breed, but it could be difficult to find suitable sites for their release.

"Major reasons for their decline are loss of habitat and predation, so finding suitable release sites and controlling predators are essential to ensuring the success of the breeding program," she said.

"They need at least 1000 hectares of vegetation, year-round water, herbage and shrubs, and lots of hollow logs and stick piles for wallaby hide-outs."

FBA Biodiversity Coordinator Graham Lightbody encouraged landholders with suitable land that would like to help protect the wallaby to get in touch.

"Unlike roos, these wallabies don't eat much grass, they prefer predominantly native herbage.

"They are not a threat to cattle feed or crop production, but landholders do need to make a long-term commitment to providing habitat and predator control for the species," Mr Lightbody said.

"This usually takes the form of creating a nature refuge on their property, but there are funding incentives available through regional natural resource management groups like FBA, as well as long-term benefits for the landholder in protecting biodiversity values on their land.

"Interested landholders should contact FBA on 4999 2800 or email [graham.lightbody@fba.org.au](mailto:graham.lightbody@fba.org.au)."

Project Kial is run solely by volunteers with minimal funding, so volunteer work, cash and in-kind donations are greatly appreciated. Please contact Tina Janssen at [tina\\_janssen@bigpond.com](mailto:tina_janssen@bigpond.com) for more information.

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