

Knee-high fence to halt rampaging Australian toads

March 15 2011



This photo taken in 2005 shows a poisonous cane toad sitting on a keeper's hand at the Taronga Zoo in Sydney. Australia's popular Kimberley wilderness region has resorted to a long knee-high fence to keep out the cane toad, which is rapidly overrunning the tourist attraction.

Australia's popular Kimberley wilderness region has resorted to a long knee-high fence to keep out the poisonous cane toad, which is rapidly overrunning the tourist attraction.

A two-kilometre (1.25 mile) barrier will be erected at Emma Gorge, made from cloth to allow other animals to move through while keeping out the [toads](#), prolific breeders which secrete a toxin that can kill pets and wildlife.

Stop the Toad Foundation campaign manager Kim Hands said hundreds of thousands of toads had penetrated into the area and were threatening native species.

"Experience in the past has been that it has been really efficient," she said of the fence.

The [cane toad](#) has spread widely in tropical Australia since being introduced to kill beetles in the 1930s, devouring insects, bird's eggs and [native species](#) such as the quoll, a cat-like marsupial.

But a recent investigation by the University of Melbourne showed that the toad -- up to 25 centimetres (10 inches) long and two kilos (4.4 pounds) in weight -- has an Achilles' heel.

Unlike indigenous amphibians that have adapted to arid conditions, it desperately needs access to nearby standing water to survive.

Placing small fencing around man-made sources such as irrigation ditches and troughs is enough to cause the toad to die of dehydration and stop its advance, said the study.

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Citation: Knee-high fence to halt rampaging Australian toads (2011, March 15) retrieved 4 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-03-knee-high-halt-rampaging-australian-toads.html>

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