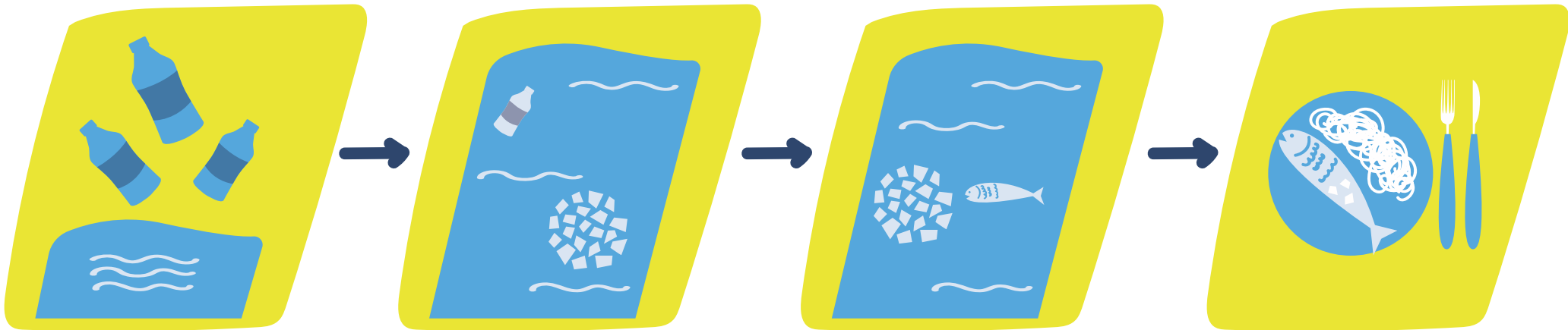


# Plastic Dinner

## STAGE 3

Food webs are very delicately balanced. Extinction, loss of habitat and introducing new species can have serious consequences for a food web. If a predator becomes extinct then its prey can reproduce more. This might mean that their prey are over-hunted. Rabbits are not native to Australia. They were introduced by humans in 1859. Within 50 years they had spread over the whole country and seriously damaged many food webs. They are still a pest.

These aren't the only ways humans impact on food webs. Lots of human activities introduce harmful things into food chains. These all have a serious impact. Perhaps the most concerning of all is plastic. Most plastic ends up in the ocean after it has been thrown away. Unfortunately, this isn't the end of the damage.



### Stage 1

Plastic is thrown into landfills or blows into rivers. Eventually it makes its way to the oceans. Plastic isn't biodegradable. This means that it won't turn back into a natural material.

### Stage 2

Over time, plastic breaks down. The pieces get smaller as they are broken apart. They eventually become small enough to be called microplastics. These are smaller than 5mm.

Microplastics are very good at accumulating pollution. These chemicals stick to the plastics.

### Stage 3

Microplastics are very damaging. Sea life including fish mistake them for food and eat them. Some microplastics are so small that the fish eat them without even realising.

The gills of fish can also be affected by microplastics.

### Stage 4

Fish are prey food. They are eaten by larger fish, sharks, whales, turtles and sea birds. All of these animals are now consuming the microplastics as well.

The fish we eat as humans comes from the sea. Lots of fish we eat today contains microplastics and the pollution that has stuck to them.

## INFERENCE FOCUS

1. Why are food webs delicately balanced?
2. Why might rabbits have damaged food chains?
3. How does the author feel about human impact on food webs? What makes you think this?
4. How might microplastics affect the gills of fish?
5. Why are larger predators eating plastic?

## VIPERS QUESTIONS

**R**

When were rabbits introduced into Australia?

**V**

Which word means an effect or result of something?

**S**

Summarise how plastic ends up in our dinner.

**P**

At which stage of the cycle would it be easiest for humans to prevent the damage? Why not later?

**V**

Which part of the word tells you that microplastics are small?

Answers:

1. Small changes make big differences
2. They were a new consumer - if they ate too much grass/vegetation, there wouldn't be enough for native species
3. The author presents lots of ways that humans have impacted negatively - look for answers that use this as a reason for their opinion.
4. They block them or rub against them and cause injuries
5. They eat the fish that have already eaten the plastic

R: 1859

V: Consequence

S: Plastic makes its way to the ocean, where it breaks down. It is eaten by fish which are then caught and eaten by us.

P: Humans could stop the cycle at stage 1 by recycling or not using plastics. After that, it is too hard to remove them from the ocean/fish.

V: Micro