



Key facts about possum, stoat and rat control in the Kia Whārite - Mangapurua Operational Area

The Department of Conservation's Whanganui Area Office plans to reduce possum, stoat and rat numbers in 32,000 hectares of the Whanganui National Park..

How it is happening

Cereal baits containing the pesticide 1080 will be aerially sown to poison possums and rats. A helicopter will distribute the baits at 2 kg hectare throughout the block. Poison baits are cylindrical pellets about 3 cm long made from cereal and dyed green. At least a week prior to the poison drop non-toxic prefeed baits will be distributed over the entire block at 1 kg per hectare. These are easy to distinguish from poison baits as they are not dyed green.

Timeframe

The operation will begin as soon as possible after the 15th of October 2009. Exact timing of the operation is reliant on weather conditions. Three fine nights are required after the application of both the prefeed and poison to achieve a high percentage kill of all target pests. The Department of Conservation (DOC) will contact all neighbours and place warning signs immediately prior to the operation starting.

Important information

This pesticide is poisonous to humans and domestic animals. Unfortunately dogs are highly susceptible to 1080. Poisoning can occur through eating baits or poisoned animals. The risk to dogs through eating poisoned carcasses will remain until they have completely rotted; this may take up to six months.

Risks can be eliminated by following these simple rules:

- **DO NOT** touch bait.
- **WATCH CHILDREN** at all times.
- **DO NOT EAT** animals from this area or from within a 2 km "buffer zone" outside the operational area boundary.
- Remember, poison baits or carcasses are **DEADLY to DOGS**.

Observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about pesticides. Warning signs indicate that pesticide residues may still be present in baits or animals. When signs are removed, this means that you can resume normal activities in the area. These signs are very important to the safety of people and their dogs. **Unfortunately they are often vandalised – please report suspected vandalism or unauthorised removal of signs.** If in doubt, check with DOC



Why we are controlling these pest species

Possums have been controlled in the Whanganui National Park by aerial 1080 since 1995. The main reason for this control beginning was the occurrence of severe dieback of kāmahi and northern rātā in the Whanganui Park due to possum browse.

Sustained possum control allows the forest to regenerate and thereby provides food for native birds, lizards and invertebrates. Predator control is proven to improve kiwi juvenile survival rates, vital for the long-term viability of kiwi. The annual decline of the kiwi population in the Whanganui National Park without control is likely to be between 3 - 5%. Research shows that stoats are on average responsible for the deaths of 60% of kiwi chicks in unprotected areas. In this area, improved forest condition and lower predator populations will raise the reproductive success of kiwi and other at risk birds including whio, kakariki, whitehead, robin, tomtit and kaka.

Previous possum control regimes in Whanganui National Park aided canopy protection but had little impact on kiwi survival. The proposed new programme targets kiwi survival as well as forest health by increasing the size of blocks treated and the use of prefeed.

Why we are using this method

To lower possum stoat and rat numbers to a level that increases native bird productivity over a block this size using bait stations is unfeasible. At the minimum 32 000 bait stations would be required and they would need to be visited at least 4 times over an 8 week period. Terrain makes it impossible to place bait stations in reach of all individual pests. Trapping the operational area would require different traps for each target species, further increasing labour required.

1080 is the only toxin currently available for aerial use for controlling both possums and rats. Monitoring of 1080 operations has also shown significant reductions in stoat numbers through secondary poisoning.

Helicopter sowing of baits using satellite navigation technology means that we can get an even coverage of bait to all possum and rat habitats. Putting all target pest animals at risk is critical to successful pest control operations. This technology also allows the pilot to be sure of the boundaries and to exclude important areas from being sown with baits.

Landcare Research in conjunction with DOC are incorporating a trial into this year's operation. This research could lead to a 60 - 75% reduction in toxic bait used in future aerial applications.

Operational planning

The use of this pesticide requires the consent of the Medical Officer of Health. The Department of Conservation assesses and approves the all vertebrate pesticide operations on public conservation land on behalf of the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA), following procedures approved by ERMA.

We consulted people most affected by this operation prior to finalising the operational detail. This involved considering their concerns and needs regarding the operational timing and boundaries.

***If you
suspect
poisoning***

Always contact:

- **your local doctor or**
- **local hospital or**
- **National Poisons Centre: 0800 764 766 (urgent calls) or 03 479 7248 (non-urgent and general enquiries), or dial 111**

***Notes from
last years
operation***

- 30,500 ha of the southern part of the Whanganui National Park was aerially treated in December 2008 with 2 kg/ha 1080 following 1 kg/ha prefeed a month earlier. Prefeed took 1 day to apply and the toxic bait took 2 days. No significant rain fell in the crucial few days following both applications.
- The aerial operation was audited by a Medical Officer of Health and DoC technical staff. This showed that all requirements and conditions were adhered to by DoC and contractors.
- Water samples were taken from five streams and tested for traces of 1080 by Landcare Research. 1080 was detected in one stream at a level 20 times less than the Ministry of Health's maximum acceptable value for 1080 in drinking water.
- There were no reports of domestic stock or dogs being killed as a result of the operation.
- Rat and stoat abundance was monitored using tracking tunnels before and after the operation. In October prior to the drop tunnels tracked percentage was 27% for rats and 14% for stoats. Two post operation checks in January and April gave a tracking rate of 0% for both rats and stoats.
- Informal observations noted by staff during tracking tunnel monitoring indicated no noticeable negative effects on bird numbers and a likely positive effect. For example young robins were seen being fed by parents late spring and later in summer young were seen being chased out of adult territories. Larger groups of rifleman were also seen following the operation than had been noticed in previous years.
- Possums were monitored in March 2009 using wax tags. The results were positive with just 10% of the 400 tags chewed. Also the possum interference with tracking tunnels dropped from 23% in October 2008 to 3% in January 2009.
- Kiwi call monitoring was conducted inside the operational area and will be repeated for the following 2 years to provide a baseline set of data. Twenty people listened in the evening for 2 hours on 3 consecutive nights at 19 different sites. Listening at some exposed sites was hampered by wind however a total of 85 kiwi calls were still heard during the official listening period. More kiwi calls were also recorded outside of this period.
- Eleven kiwi at Aotuhia are monitored by the Taranaki Kiwi Trust as part of the BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust Operation Nest Egg Program. These kiwi occupy territories within the operational area and none died following the operation.

For more information

Please get in touch with Rod if you would like more information or want to be notified again prior to the operation:

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Operational Area 2009



Operational Area (approximately 32,000ha)

